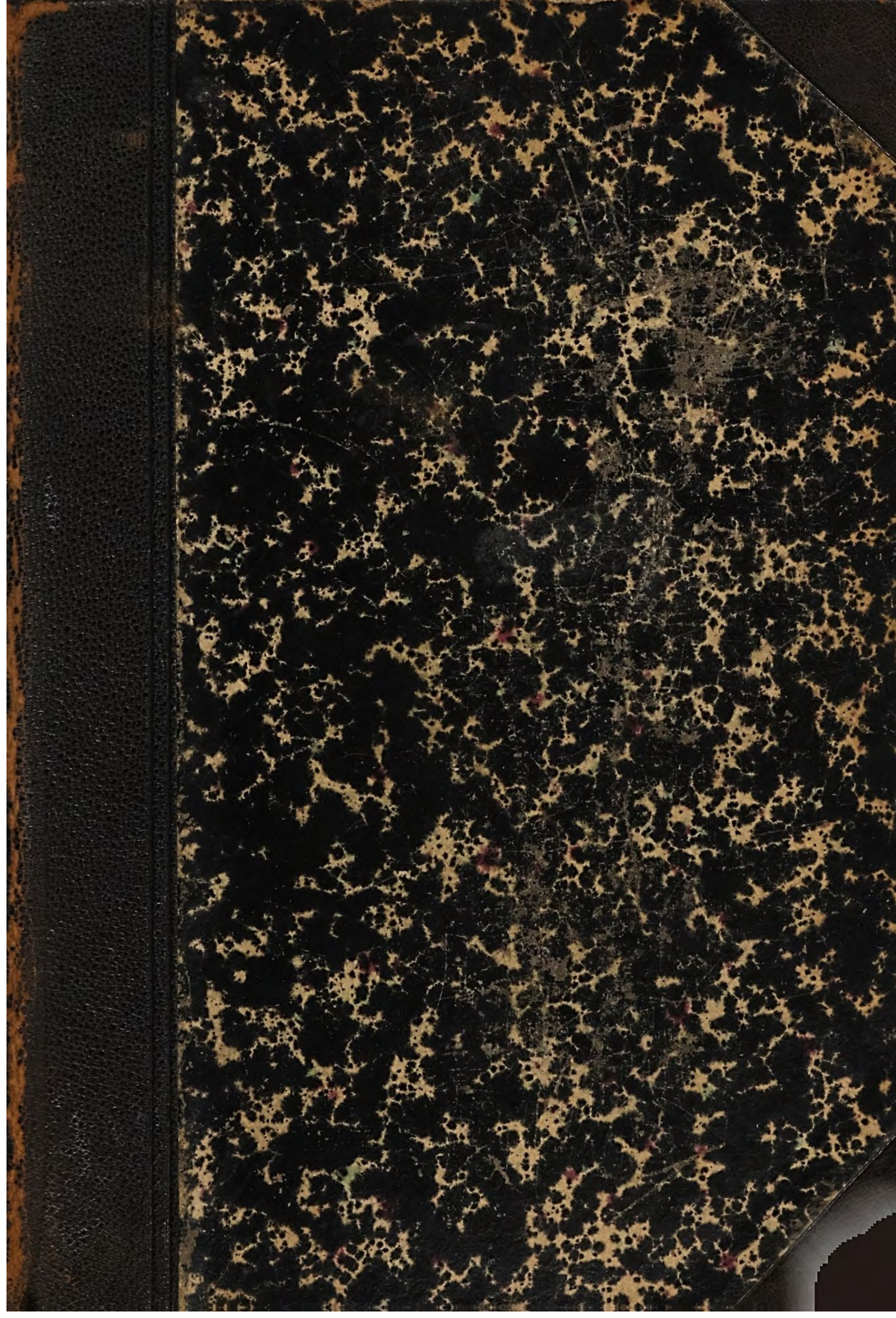




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THE STORY OF A SINGER

BY

EDNA LYALL,

AUTHOR OF

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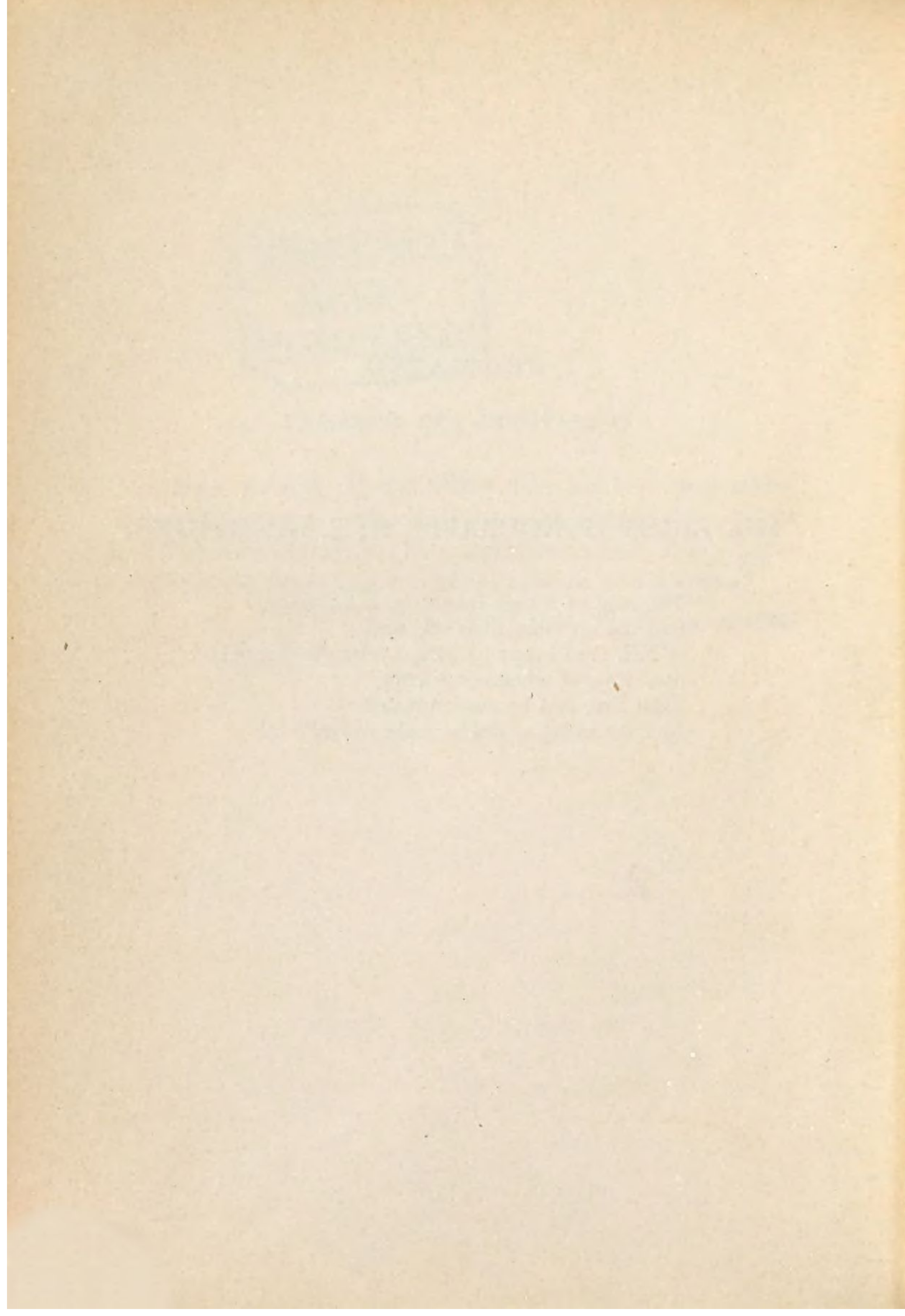


“What we wish is, that where there has been despondency there shall be hope; where there has been mistrust there shall be confidence; where there has been alienation and hate there shall be woven the ties of a strong attachment between man and man.”

THE RIGHT HON. W. E. GLADSTONE.

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TO
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“The soul of a high intent, be it known,
Can die no more than any soul
Which God keeps by Him under the throne;
And this, at whatever interim,
Shall live, and be consummated
Into the being of deeds made whole.”



D O R E E N.

CHAPTER I.

"A voice of . . . heavenly sweetness, with that reedy thrill in it which you have heard in the thrush's even-song."

OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES.

"HER name is Doreen," said Max Hereford, laying emphatic stress on the last syllable. "Why do you insist on calling her the little Colleen Bawn?"

"Because she invariably wears that red 'Colleen Bawn' cloak," replied his cousin Miriam, with a gleam of amusement in her dark eyes. "Probably, like charity, it hides a multitude of sins, for I fancy the O'Ryans are very poor and of the shabby genteel sort. My old French governess would have called the cloak a '*Couvre douleur*.'"

"Who are you speaking about, my dear?" said Mrs. Hereford, looking up from her embroidery frame.

"Why, aunt, about the little Irish girl that Mr. Desmond and Max take such delight in studying. We found her in difficulties one day with Mr. Foxell's dog, which was frightening her small brother nearly into fits,

and ever since Max has done nothing but rave about her charming little touch of the brogue and her bewitching voice. Several times she has been out in the boat with us, and I have been obliged, in consequence, to play the unpleasant part of second fiddle."

"She is a child of twelve years old, mother," said Max, leaving John Desmond, his tutor, to enter a protest against Miriam's last sentence, "the jolliest little girl you ever saw. She and her mother are lodging at that grey house not far from the lodge. Michael—that's the small boy—had been ill, and the mother seems to be half an invalid."

"You should have told me of her before," said Mrs. Hereford. "She might have been glad to borrow books, for this lonely country place must be dull for an invalid. Is she as Irish as her daughter?"

"No: on the contrary, she is English, and seems quiet and reserved, and as if she had lived through a lot of trouble. I can't make out much about the father, except that they are to join him in a few weeks' time; I fancy he is a literary man of some sort: Doreen spoke once about his writing."

"It is a very curious name," said Mrs. Hereford.

"It makes one think of a soup tureen," said Miriam, naughtily. "Though Max will declare that it is the most beautiful old Irish name in existence. Nothing offends him more than to lay the accent on the first syllable. If I call the child Dor-een, he says it sounds like the feminine of John Dory."

"She certainly has the most beautiful voice," said John Desmond. "Could we not make her sing to Mrs. Hereford?"

Miriam clapped her hands with delight at the suggestion.

"The very thing," she exclaimed, "to pass away this dull afternoon. See, it does not rain so very fast, and I am sure that cloak must be waterproof. Do go and fetch her, Max, and tell her that I am shut in with a bad cold, and want to be amused."

"Stay; I had better write to Mrs. O'Ryan. It is hardly civil not to explain to her that I am unable just now to call upon her; and, Max, you can take down the new 'Contemporary'; she might like to see it," said Mrs. Hereford, turning from her embroidery frame to a cosy little writing-table that stood by the hearth.

The mother and son were not unlike each other. Each had the same well-cut features, and warm English colouring; and though Mrs. Hereford's light brown hair was flecked with grey, her eyes were almost as bright and frank as her son's. They were eyes which, once seen, could never be forgotten, owing to their curious colour, which some people called light hazel, and others yellow, but which all agreed in praising. Mrs. Hereford had the ready wit and the strong character which not unfrequently accompany a delicate physique. She was often unable to take any part in active life, but she had never for a single day ceased to guide and influence Max, and had contrived somehow, during the long years of her widowhood, not to spoil him. Others had done their best, it is true, to flatter and make much of the young heir of Monkton Verney, but the mother had loved him well enough to deny herself the pleasure of indulging him to her heart's content, and had done her best to mitigate the flattery of others.

"You must not make him a prig," she had protested when his godmother had showered down upon him "treasuries of devotion" and manuals of self-examination.

"You shall not over-amuse him and make him *blasé* before he is of age," she had said plainly to Colonel Hereford, his uncle and guardian, whose idea of making a schoolboy happy was to fill his pockets with money, let him fare sumptuously every day, and take him to the play every night.

Max was now eighteen; in October he was to go up to Oxford, and for some months John Desmond had been coaching him. It was partly in order that he might have more time for reading that Mrs. Hereford had given up the usual summer visit to Switzerland, and had taken for three months an old castle in the South of Ireland, far removed from distractions of any sort, and in the heart of a wild, mountainous district. She had brought her niece with her as a companion; and Miriam, tired with her first London season, was glad enough to rest and read novels, to amuse herself in a cousinly fashion with Max, and to enjoy the tutor's silent admiration. Life, as yet, was not at all a serious thing to her; she was just playing with it in a happy, contented fashion, with a firm conviction that the future must infallibly be better than the present, and a comfortable sense of success and self-satisfaction to buoy her up.

The little, dreary, grey house at which the O'Ryans were staying stood at the foot of a mountain called Kilrourk, and was not more than five minutes' walk from the gates of Castle Karey. Max, having inquired

for Mrs. O’Ryan, was ushered by the unkempt but pleasant-looking landlady into a room in which the chairs and tables were pushed about in wild disorder, while on the back of the old-fashioned horsehair sofa sat a little girl with her arms tied behind her and a pair of tongs uncomfortably dangling from them.

“God save Ireland!” she cried. Whereupon the small boy who mounted guard beside her, with a tin pot for a helmet and a brand-new sixpenny sword, silenced her in the most peremptory fashion.

“Faith, children, and whatever is it that you are afther, at all, at all!” exclaimed the landlady. “Here is a gintleman from the Castle come to see the mis-thress.”

Doreen, who had been sitting with her back to the door, started up, the fire-irons about her hands and feet clanking dismally, while the dragoon, who was of a timid nature, drooped his head shyly, whereupon the tin pot fell with a clatter to the ground.

“I can’t shake hands with you,” said Doreen, her blue eyes dancing with merriment. “We are playing prisoners, and I’m heavily ironed.”

“And who is this?” said Max, patting Michael’s head reassuringly.

“He’s an English dragoon guarding me. I’m John Mitchel, and have got fourteen years’ transportation. This sofa is the prison van, and we are driving from the court, and just now I saw a great crowd and asked where the people were going, and he—the dragoon—told me they were going to a flower show. You know they really did say that to Mitchel; but it was a lie—the people had come because they loved him.”

"My mother has sent a note to Mrs. O'Ryan, asking if you will come to the Castle," said Max. "Should you be afraid of the rain?"

"Oh, not of the rain," said Doreen, loftily; "but you see I can't very well leave home, for my mother is lying down with one of her bad headaches."

"But perhaps the house would be quieter if you came," said Max. Then, seeing that he had said quite the wrong thing, "I mean, of course, if you brought the dragoon with you."

"It's my birthday," said Michael, rather dismally, "and we was going to pop corn over the kitchen fire."

"We have a fire in the drawing-room, summer though it is," said Max; "that old place is as cold as a barn. Bring your corn with you, and you shall show me how to do it. And there are real helmets and swords there which you will like to see."

The armour settled the question, and before long Max and the two children were walking along the dripping avenue which led down to Castle Karey.

"Here they are, mother," he said, taking them straight into the drawing-room; and Mrs. Hereford, looking up somewhat curiously, saw a little red-cloaked figure, with a parcel tucked under one arm, and a small boy clinging to the other.

Doreen was small for her age; she scarcely looked more than ten years old. She had a little pale, winsome face, and a thick bush of dark brown hair; her blue eyes were shaded by long and singularly black lashes; and the face was of that pure Irish type, oval in shape, with rather high cheek-bones, finely moulded chin,

and sweet but firm mouth, so often to be met with in the South and West.

"I am glad you could come," said Mrs. Hereford, greeting the little couple kindly; "I hope you did not get very wet."

"Thank-you, no; it is such a little way: but if you will let me take Michael into the hall, I will change his boots; he had bronchitis last month, and we have to be careful with him."

There was something so captivating in the silvery voice, with its sweet modulations, and in the little motherly air with which the child glanced at Michael, that Mrs. Hereford bent down and kissed her.

"I hope you have your own shoes, too, in that parcel," she said.

"No," said Doreen, "I forgot my own; but it doesn't matter, because I am quite strong you see."

"Miriam, dear, you will take them both to your room," said Mrs. Hereford, "and see if you cannot find some slippers." And Miriam, who was the most good-natured person possible, took charge of the two children, and had soon made even shy Michael quite at his ease.

Doreen looked wonderingly around the great panelled drawing-room when she returned, never having seen before such quaint old oak furniture, such marvellous crewel work of ancient design, such stores of old-world china. Her little eager face delighted Mrs. Hereford.

"Do you like it?" she said. "We have all taken a fancy to this room."

"I never saw such a beautiful story-book place be-

fore," said Doreen, "and it all smells so lovely and old."

They laughed, but well understood what she meant; for, indeed, the whole Castle had that old-time atmosphere which, indescribable as it is, lends such a charm to the homes of generations gone by.

"Do you think you could sing to my mother?" said Max. "I want her very much to hear the song you gave us in the boat last week."

"You mean 'She is far from the land,'" said Doreen; "but the worst of it is, that it is almost sure to make Michael cry: he seems to think it means I am going to die when that bit comes, 'Oh, make her a grave.' It is very funny, for he never cries at 'Kathleen O'More.'"

"You don't sing that with the tears in your voice," said Michael; "but I will promise not to cry, if directly after you will sing, 'Tis no time to take a wife.'"

"What a lugubrious choice," said Miriam, laughing.

"Ah! but he did take a wife in spite of them all," said Doreen. "You will see."

And with a happy freedom from nervousness, partly caused by her youth and simplicity, and partly by the kindly, uncritical faces around her, she began to sing.

Her voice, though as yet untrained and immature, was clear and sweet as a bird's. It rang through the old room; it thrilled through Mrs. Hereford's heart with a strange inexplicable power, it softened Miriam's bright eyes, it lighted up John Desmond's thoughtful face, and it filled Max with exultation. It seemed to him that the voice was in some sense his; he delighted in having been

the one to discover such a treasure in this lonely Irish hamlet.

No one was surprised that little Michael had to fight gallantly in order to keep his promise. He sat with his funny little face rigidly fixed, lips pressed together, eyes staring hard at the painting of the Battle of the Boyne on the opposite wall, while in his mind he was saying, "I'm six years old. I must give up crying."

But it was all very well to theorise in this fashion; the fact remained that most of the grown-up folk had tears in their eyes when Doreen sang,—

"She sings the wild song of her dear native plains,
Ev'ry note which he loved awaking:
Ah! little they think who delight in her strains
How the heart of the minstrel is breaking.

"He had lived for his love, for his country he died,
They were all that to life had entwin'd him;—
Nor soon shall the tears of his country be dried,
Nor long will his love stay behind him."

"Who is it all about?" asked Miriam, at the end.

"Father told me it was about Miss Curran who was betrothed to Robert Emmet," said Doreen.

"And who was Robert Emmet?"

The child opened her eyes wide, with an air of such naïve surprise that no one could possibly have been offended by the astonished question that escaped her.

"Didn't they teach Irish history at your school? Why, Robert Emmet was one of our greatest patriots! They hung him; Michael and I often play at his trial, and take turns fairly at being horrid Judge Norbury that sentenced him. He is buried in Dublin, you know, but there is no monument yet. It is waiting, as he wished,

for its epitaph, till Ireland takes her place among the nations of the earth."

She paused, glanced anxiously at Michael's brimming eyes, and soon made them all laugh with the blithe song,—

"'Tis no time to take a wife, honest John O'Grady.

When the land is filled with strife, gallant John O'Grady.

Who can think of beauty's charms, in the midst of war's alarms?

'That can I, to be sure!' said fearless John O'Grady."

Her humour was equal to her pathos, and they all realised that a child with such gifts had in all probability a great career before her. And yet, somehow, it was hard to think of a public life for that little, simple, innocent-faced girl. She was so fresh and sweet and pure that Mrs. Hereford shrank from the thought of what she might become in that wearing struggle for fame which is the greatest test of character.

"Where do you get your voice from?" she asked, drawing the child down to the sofa beside her. "Is your mother musical?"

"No; but my father sings well, though he has never been taught. He says I shall be taught when we go to America."

"You are going to leave Ireland, then?"

"Yes," said Doreen, sighing. "As soon as father comes back."

"You will be sorry to leave your country, I am sure," said Mrs. Hereford. "But perhaps your father has been preparing a nice home for you over in America?"

Doreen's blue eyes opened wide, with a puzzled expression.

"I—I thought you knew," she said. "He is in Portland Prison."

There was a moment's silence. Then Max struck in quickly, to the relief of everyone else.

"For his political views, no doubt," he said.

"Oh yes," rejoined Doreen quickly, her colour rising, "of course not for anything wrong. It is because he loved Ireland, and because he is a Fenian."

"And he will soon be with you again?" asked Mrs. Hereford gently, taking the child's hot little hand in hers, as she spoke, with a tender, comforting clasp that seemed like a caress.

"He will be free almost directly now," said Doreen, her eyes lighting up. "We are to meet him at Queens-town and to sail for New York. It seems such a long, long time since he went away, though. Of course we go to see him now and then, but it is, oh, so tantalising. For the first few weeks we used to see him every day in Richmond Prison, and then in Kilmainham; but after the trial he was sent to England, for fear the Irish people should rescue him."

"Has he been in prison a long time?" asked John Desmond.

"About five years," said Doreen. "Michael can't remember the time when he lived at home. Of course he was quite a baby; but I was seven, and can remember just how he looked the morning they arrested him. He had not been to bed at all that night, because mother was ill, and he was too anxious to leave her. He had been writing letters in her room, and by-and-by came downstairs to say she was asleep; and he let me seal his letters, and afterwards I sat on his knee,

making patterns on my arm with the seal he wore on his watch-chain. It had a cross and an anchor, and was shaped like a shamrock leaf. I suppose we were talking and laughing together; for we never heard what was going on till all at once three men came into the room, and one of them strode up to my father, and thrusting his hand between us laid it on father's shoulder and told him that he arrested him, and showed him a paper. At first I wasn't frightened, only surprised. I didn't understand what they were talking about; but when I looked into father's face, I began to be terrified, for it had quite changed. I think he was full of anger and grief. They let him go upstairs with one of the men to say good-bye to my mother, and the men who were left took up all the letters that were on the table where I had been sealing them, and turned out father's desk and hunted everywhere for papers. But when I began to cry, one of them was very kind to me; he looked so sorry for me that I've always sort of liked policemen since. He said, 'Don't cry, my pretty little maid.'

"Then father came down once more, and his face was changed again—it looked very still and strong; he took me up in his arms and kissed me a great many times, and when he said, 'Take care of mother and little Michael till I come back,' his voice was changed, too, so that I hardly knew it."

Remembering the injunction to take care of Michael, she glanced round with an uneasy unconsciousness that he was too quiet, and began to make many apologies when she found that he had emptied his little paper bag of corn on to the hearth rug and was carefully

choosing out the largest grains. It was something of a relief to turn from the startling story of the Fenian father to the children's funny explanation of the mysteries of corn-popping. "It's the way you find out if your friendships are going to last," said Doreen, as Miriam set on the fire the little copper skillet for which she had asked. "There is a grain of corn for each of us, and now we must choose pairs. You must choose first," and she looked up at her hostess, her blue eyes no longer sad with memories, but brimming over with laughter and enjoyment of the game.

"I will choose Michael," said Mrs. Hereford.

"And I will choose Mr. Desmond," said Miriam, with a coquettish glance at the tutor.

"Then that means that we two are together," said Doreen, composedly, drawing Max towards the hearth and making him drop his grain of corn into the skillet beside hers. "Now we must watch and see how they pop."

The first to go were Mrs. Hereford's and Michael's; they popped just as they should have done, inside the skillet.

"You and I will be friends for ever and ever," said the child, clapping his hands. "I wonder if you'll be so lucky, Doreen."

"No," said the little sister. "It hardly ever comes that more than one pair are lucky. Ah, there goes Mr. Desmond! Sure, and it's you that will be breaking your friendship; for it popped outside and flew right towards you, and there goes the other popping inside. It will be all your fault. What a long time ours do take. At last! there they go! Oh dear, dear! No luck at all for

us; our grains both popped outside! That means that we shall both agree to separate. I'm never lucky at corn-popping unless I pair with Michael, and we always stay friends."

"Then I shall make hay while the sun shines," said Max, laughing. "And to-morrow you must come again with us in the boat."

CHAPTER II.

"Rent in other countries means the surplus after the farmer has been liberally paid for his skill and labour; in Ireland it means the whole produce of the soil except a potato-pit. If the farmer strove for more, his master knew how to bring him to speedy submission. He could carry away his implements of trade by the law of distress, or rob him of his sole pursuit in life by the law of eviction."—CHARLES GAVAN DUFFY, *Young Ireland*.

AFTER dinner that evening, the talk naturally enough turned upon the story which little Doreen had told. It was not difficult to fill in the gaps that had occurred in the child's account, and John Desmond seemed well up in all the details of the Irish troubles five years before.

"One has grown so accustomed to regard Fenian and fiend as equivalent terms," said Miriam, "that it almost took one's breath away to hear that pretty little girl talking of the arrest as she did, and counting the days till her father is released."

"Yet to Irish ears Fenian suggests all sorts of memories of the heroic deeds of the Feni, or companions of Finn, one of the noblest of all the warriors in Irish tales," said Desmond. "I have no doubt Doreen

O’Ryan could tell you plenty of the legends connected with his name.”

“But her father,” said Mrs. Hereford. “Do you imagine he is one of those desperate wretches who caused the explosion at Clerkenwell?”

“No; those were a few desperadoes, and the genuine Fenians utterly repudiated all connection with them. He must, of course, have been mixed up with the insurrection in some way—possibly was on the staff of that paper of theirs.”

“’Tis almost enough to make one pardon the wildest schemes for reform to see the state of things in this place,” said Max. “I wonder what sort of man Lord Byfield is to allow it.”

“Oh, he is a good enough fellow,” said Desmond. “But he detests this place. They say he hasn’t been here for years, and leaves everything to that brute Foxell, his agent. I hate that man, with his arrogant manner, and his way of talking of the tenants as though they were pigs.”

“The pigs that pay the rent!” said Max, with a laugh. “He is a bully, and the people detest him. I don’t know which is the greater brute, himself or his dog.”

“You are very rough on the dog,” said Desmond; “the man’s not worthy to be named in the same day with him!”

“Come, Max,” said Mrs. Hereford, “let us have our game of backgammon; I must have my revenge on you for last night.”

The tutor wandered away to the other end of the drawing-room, where Miriam was playing a sad little

Polish melody of which he was specially fond. She looked up at his approach, with smiling welcome in her brown eyes. Her grandmother had been a Jewess, and Miriam had inherited her beauty: there was something very fascinating about her, and few could resist the spell. Max had been under it more or less all his life, though he knew Miriam's faults well enough; even Mrs. Hereford, though strongly disapproving of some of her niece's proceedings, clung to the girl with an affection which she could not feel towards some perhaps more deserving of favour. That Miriam after a brilliantly successful London season should be in danger of falling in love with the tutor never occurred to her aunt. Desmond was poor and plain,—a sallow man with a very high but somewhat narrow forehead, and dark wild-looking eyes, which seemed out of keeping with the quiet, sedate manner and ordinary face. "He is a mixture of the Quaker and the brigand," had been Miriam's naughty criticism when she had first met him. But little by little his silent admiration began to tell upon her; she began to look up to him, to value his opinion. A reverence which she had never before felt for anyone took possession of her heart; she realised that his love for her was something more than admiration for her face, and that afternoon, as little Doreen had sung to them, she had known for the first time that she loved John Desmond. A sort of delicious, dreamy happiness filled her heart as he sat beside her in the dimly-lighted room. She played, every now and then, quiet, dreamy music in accordance with her mood, but for a great part of the time they talked—that new, sweet, confidential talk that was infinitely more charming to her than the

badinage and the compliments of which she had grown very weary in London.

She slept little that night, but kept living over again all the delicious hours of the afternoon and evening, so that naturally enough the morning found her worn and tired and quite in a mood to yield to her aunt's advice, and keep in bed for a few hours in the hope of curing her cold.

Desmond, finding that there was no chance of seeing her before five o'clock tea, proposed that he and Max should walk across the mountains to Lough Lee, where he had hopes of finding a certain rare plant for which he had long sought in vain.

"Let us at the same time keep our promise to Doreen, and take her with us on the pony," said Max. "The child is longing to see that lake about which she was telling us some old legend."

Doreen's delight when the tutor and his pupil arrived at the little grey lodging-house, leading a mountain pony for her special use, was pretty to see. She came running out to meet them.

"You are sure the day will not be too much for you?" asked Max; "the lake is many miles off, even by this short cut over the mountains."

"Oh no," she protested, "I could go all day long on a pony, it is only such a pity that it's too far for Michael; but I've promised to tell him all about it, and to bring him a great bunch of flowers. I believe he thinks Lough Lee is a sort of fairy place, and he will expect me to see Ugly Gilla Dacker and his horrible horse, or Dermot of the Bright Face, or some of those people."

Max made her tell them about the brave Feni, in the days of old. Her silvery voice would have made the dullest legend charming; and though Desmond was all the time longing for another voice and another face, he was fain to own that the child was a delightful companion.

The day was fine though somewhat grey; but as they climbed higher over the rock-strewn ground, the sun came out brightly for a time, glorifying the well-known outline of the range of hills which were seen from the Castle windows, and revealing exquisite glimpses of the Kerry mountains. By-and-by they descended to the right, into a valley, and emerging upon a rough tract, wound down into the road which led to the gloomy and desolate lake.

Doreen's face was a curious study. Here was the place she had dreamed of so long, and it was not the least like her dreams. It was indescribably sad-looking; its very beauty seemed so steeped in melancholy, that all her romance of the past was stricken dead, and a sense of oppression fell upon her, sadly spoiling her happiness.

Max, to distract her attention, began to tell her about the walks near his home at Monkton Verney, of the little lake in the garden with its water-lilies, and the old ruined priory in the park, and of the heath-hills and fir-hills down which she would enjoy running.

And soon in the excitement of getting into the boat and of being allowed to steer, Doreen recovered her spirits and began to sing merry songs in spite of the excessive gloom of this desolate spot. It was impossible to be melancholy for any length of time with a companion like Max. It was not that he was specially

witty, but his whole aspect was so full of cheerfulness, he so thoroughly enjoyed life, that he carried about him a sort of atmosphere of lightheartedness which insensibly affected his companions. They laughed and talked and sang and jested, while John Desmond, intent on spoils, made them land him every few minutes to search for that insignificant but rare plant which their careless eyes were little likely to discover. Doreen, cosily ensconced in the stern, looked with the innocent admiration of a child at the sunburnt, glowing face opposite her, with its light-brown hair and the incipient moustache of which the owner was secretly vain, and the well-opened, fearless eyes which seemed full of sunshine. And Max felt strangely drawn to this merry little girl in the familiar red cloak; the sweet voice and the rippling laughter fairly bewitched him: little did he think that this hour on the lake was destined to be the last hour of her childhood and the last hour of his own careless youth.

"Let us row across to the further side," said Desmond; "steer for that cabin from which the smoke is rising."

Doreen glanced across the water and saw that from a little roughly built cabin the turf fire was sending up a curling column of blue smoke.

"What a dreary place to live in!" she exclaimed; "but see, there is a nice clearing all round it at the back. I don't see where you can land very well, for the rocks fall sheer away down to the water from the cabin."

Max turned, and descried a possible landing-place a few yards to the right of the hut, and Doreen, anx-

ious to steer them with the utmost precision, broke off in the midst of singing the "Minstrel Boy," and concentrated her whole attention on her work. In the silence that followed, the sound of voices reached them distinctly from the shore.

"There is a woman crying!" exclaimed Doreen, a startled, pitying look stealing over her face.

Desmond turned round to see whence the noise proceeded, and they soon perceived two men standing on the little patch of ground before the cabin, while in the open doorway a woman, with her apron thrown over her head, was sobbing aloud with a wild, unrestrained grief that shook her from head to foot. The men were talking together, evidently on some vexed question.

"What's up, I wonder," said Max. "Why, look, 'tis Mr. Foxell, the agent; see how the fellow blusters, and how he threatens the old man!"

"It's old Larry, our potato man!" exclaimed Doreen. "He comes every week with his donkey-cart and sells us things. Oh, look! look! how angry he is with him!"

"Pull to shore as fast as you can," said Desmond, a look of fury in his dark eyes. He leapt out, and Max followed him, eager to see what was passing.

"You had better stay in the boat," he said to Doreen. "The agent seems in such a temper, I should not like you to come near him."

The child obeyed, not much liking to be left all alone, but too much absorbed in the loud altercation which she could plainly hear from the little plateau above her to have much leisure for fear. She let the boat drift out a little, so that she could see what was passing by the cabin. Max stood by the open door, among a whole

litter of little pigs, talking to the woman, whose wailing had ceased; but John Desmond had stepped in between old Larry and the agent, and was vehemently arguing in the poor old peasant's defence.

"Because the man has made a garden out of a wilderness, because he has toiled while the landlord played, and starved while the landlord feasted, you double his rent. That is your devilish plan!" he cried, in a voice that appalled Doreen.

"Allow me to remind you, sir," said the agent angrily, "that 'tis not the part of a meddlesome tourist to interfere."

"Look at my petaty patch, yer honour," moaned old Larry. "Sure it was just a disused stone quarry, with niver a grain o' soil, till on me own back I carried the airth to it, little by little, and a mortal time it took, and now he asks rint for the land I made wid me own hands, and if I don't pay it,—and the blissed saints know it's just that I can't do that same,—he will pull down the cabin that I built myself. Sure, and I'm an ould man to begin all over again." He turned away and began to sob like a child.

"You d—d hypocrite!" said the agent. "Have done with that nonsense, and don't waste any more of my time. The place is worth double what it was, and you shall pay or go."

"I'll not go!" wailed the old man, facing round upon the agent, in a passion of wrath and grief. "It's bin my home long years before your cruel face was iver seen at Castle Karey, my sowl to the divil if I lave it!"

"Then I shall have it pulled about your ears," said the agent.

"Shame! Shame!" cried Desmond. "I'll have this case exposed in the papers—'tis not to be borne."

"No cockneys here, please," said Foxell insolently, his bull-dog face darkening with anger.

"I, too, am an Irishman," said Desmond, for the first time feeling that thrill of patriotism which reminded him that although English by education, he had yet Irish blood in his veins.

"Then one stick will serve for the two; for insolence there's not a pin to choose between you," said Foxell, irritated to the last degree; and, seizing Larry by his shirt collar, he was about to bring his knotted walking-stick down on the old man's bent shoulders, when Desmond, maddened by the sight, sprang forward and wrenched it from his hand. Both were now beside themselves with anger; they closed with each other and fought with a fury which terrified Doreen. She saw Max hurry down from the cabin door and try to induce them to stop. He might as well have spoken to two wild beasts; for their blood was up, and nothing now would quiet them. The fight, though it seemed long, was in reality brief enough; nearer and yet nearer the two struggling figures drew to the verge of the rock overhanging the lake; it seemed to Doreen that they would both be hurled over into the water, and in deadly terror she rowed close into the little cove where they had landed.

The combatants were still visible. She could plainly see Desmond's wild eyes with their horrible, gleaming light; then suddenly she saw the agent's grip relax; his hand fell back from Desmond's throat; she caught just one glimpse of a dreadful, distorted, blackened face, as he fell back from the rock. There was a splash, an

exclamation of horror from Max; then the waters of Lough Lee closed over James Foxell.

For a minute Doreen sat motionless; she seemed paralysed with horror; it was with intense relief that she saw Max plunging down between the arbutus trees that surrounded the landing-place.

"Steer to the place where he sank," he exclaimed, springing into the boat and pushing off from the shore. With trembling hands Doreen grasped the tiller, ashamed of the terror that seized upon her when she thought of again beholding that dreadful face. "Perhaps he is not really dead; perhaps we may save him," she said to herself, fixing her eyes steadily on the spot where the agent had disappeared, and putting force upon herself to steer to the very best of her ability. All at once a little cry escaped her; for, looking steadfastly at the water, she saw that dreadful vision rise again to the surface. Max made a desperate but ineffectual effort to lay hold of the body; for one moment he grasped the short wet hair, but it was dragged downwards; it slid through his fingers, and again the waters closed over Foxell. The boy—pale through all his sunburning—dropped back into his place in the boat, panting for breath.

"He was quite dead," he said after a moment, glancing up at Doreen. "But perhaps he will rise again; we will wait and see."

They waited in silence for what seemed to Doreen a long time; the dreadful gloom of the place grew more and more intense. If she looked at the purple mountains surrounding them, she fancied fiends hideously staring at them from among the grey boulders; if she looked into the lake, its dark waters seemed as though peopled by

endless repetitions of that dreadful, distorted face which must for ever haunt her memory.

"It's no use waiting longer," said Max at length. "I suppose it must have caught in the reeds at the bottom and will not float up again."

"But what will they do to Mr. Desmond?" cried Doreen, her eyes dilating, as a terrible thought for the first time occurred to her. "They will say he murdered that man; he will be hung or kept in prison!"

"They will probably call it murder," said Max with a shudder. "But, Doreen, if ever I saw a man mad,—for the time quite mad,—why, it was he. Did you see his eyes?"

"Yes," said Doreen, "they looked wild and dreadful; he was quite changed. If people ask us how it all happened, we can explain to them that he was mad. Oh, don't leave me alone in the boat," she added, as Max sprang ashore at the landing-place.

He was too much agitated to have very much thought for her just then, but he turned and held out his arms to her, and lifted her on to dry ground; then, with knees trembling beneath her, she toiled after him up the bank, among the holly-bushes and the arbutus-trees, and followed him across the open ground beyond, to the cabin. Everyone had gone inside, even the pigs, and old Larry and his wife were talking fast and eagerly. John Desmond sat on a three-legged stool beside the turf fire; his face was flushed; there was a strange look in his dark eyes; he was quite silent, and took no notice of their entrance.

"He must have been unconscious when he fell," said

Max to Larry. "The body only rose once to the surface, and I couldn't lay hold of it."

"All the better, sir," said Larry gravely. "'Tis eighty feet dape, and it do be makin' a safe grave. I take it he'll lie as aisy down there among the reeds as iver he'd a done in churchyard mould; and may God have mercy on his sowl!"

As he spoke, the old man thrust into the fire the knotted stick that the agent had let fall when he closed with Desmond.

"What do you do that for?" asked Max.

"Sure thin, yer honour, 'tis the last of the man that's lift," said Larry. "His hat was made fast with a string through his buttonhole and will tell no tales. And now this stick is kindlin' fine, and there won't be the laist little small bit to git his honour there into throuble."

Desmond looked up. "What is that you are saying?" he asked, as if his mind had just awaked to the present.

"We say, your honour, that we will niver spake one word of what we heard 'and saw awhile since. You stood by us, and, by the cras o' Christ, we'll stand by you. Norah, swear the same."

The old woman crossed her forefingers with a gesture which impressed Doreen strangely.

"By the cras o' Christ," she repeated solemnly, "neither to man, woman, nor child—no, nor even to the praist himself—will I tell what I saw and heard this day."

Desmond rose from his place by the fire. "Thank-you," he said, in a voice unlike his own. Then, staggering a little as though seized by giddiness, he put his

hand within his pupil's arm. "I must go away," he said; and with hurried farewells to the old peasant and his wife, they left the cabin and once more got into the boat.

"Steer for the landing-place," said Max; and poor little Doreen fixed her eyes bravely on the rude causeway at the far end of the lake, and tried not to let herself think of what lay beneath the cold grey waters over which they were gliding.

CHAPTER III.

"'God of justice!' I sighed, 'send your spirit down
On these lords so cruel and proud,
And soften their hearts, and relax their frown,
Or else,' I cried aloud—
'Vouchsafe thy strength to the peasant's hand
To drive them at length from off the land!'"

THOMAS DAVIS.

THEY had rowed a quarter of a mile before anyone spoke; at last John Desmond broke the silence.

"When does the next train leave Kilbeggan?" he asked.

"There is one at nine," said Max, with a startled look. "But you are surely not going?"

"I can't stay here to bring your mother into all this trouble, and your cousin," said Desmond, hoarsely. "Were it not for them I would wait and give myself up. 'Tis an hour's drive to the station, but that will leave me time to get my things together. I can say that I am hastily summoned home, owing to family trouble."

"Will not your leaving possibly lead to suspicion?" said Max.

"I think not," said the tutor. "And if it does, there is not a shred of evidence against me. Old Larry and his wife will not break that oath, and you—of course I can trust you."

"Of course," said the boy. "I give you my word that I will not tell."

Yet even as he spoke, he felt the awful burden that had been thrust upon him, and his heart sank as he reflected that all through life he must carry with him this terrible secret.

"There is that child," said Desmond. "What are we to do about her?"

"Leave her to me," said Max, with an inexpressible dislike to the thought of extorting a promise from their light-hearted little playfellow. Must she, too, be burdened with this horrible secret? It would be harder, infinitely harder, for her to bear!

"Somehow her lips must be closed, at anyrate for the present," said Desmond. "Sooner or later 'tis bound to leak out through her—she has a ready tongue as a child, and will have it, you may be sure, as a woman. The fear that may restrain her now will have no power a few years hence. But somehow you must get her to swear secrecy, or I am undone."

Doreen had not heard the whole of this speech; they were nearing the landing-place, and she was intent on her steering; but a word or two had reached her, and she knew that before long she, too, would be asked to swear as Larry and Norah had done. The thought

weighed upon her. But she was left unmolested for some little time.

Desmond was so much exhausted that he proposed trying to hire a car at the nearest inn, and Doreen herself was not sorry to lose the ride across the mountains. They gave the pony in charge to the landlord of the forlorn little hostelry not far from the lake, and with a fresh horse and a crazy and springless outside car made their way back to Castle Karey, by the more circuitous but easier highroad. A blight, however, seemed to have fallen upon all they saw, and Doreen shuddered as they drove through the narrow, rocky pass, with its threatening crags and its rugged grey and purple boulders, from which, ever and anon, it seemed to her that the agent's face looked fiercely forth. As they drew nearer home, the dreadful longing to rush straight to her mother and tell her everything, grew almost overpowering. But at the first of the gates leading into the Castle grounds Max Hereford paused.

"I promised once to show you the grotto," he said, feeling much as if he were trapping the poor little girl to her doom. "We will come now, while Mr. Desmond goes on to the Lodge and settles with the driver."

Desmond glanced at them in an abstracted way as they got down. Then, without a word, he drove on. The tears started to Doreen's eyes; she longed so very much to go with him, to sob out all her terror and misery on her mother's knee; if she could but do that, surely the horrible face would cease to haunt her?

With unwilling feet she walked beside Max through the wood; the winding path was cut through the undergrowth of nut trees which had clustered about some fine

old oaks, and at any other time it would have been to her the most fascinating place. Even now the beauty and the quiet, sheltered peace of the wood relieved her heavy heart, it made such a welcome contrast to the gloomy pass and the desolate Lough Lee, and the horrible scene which had taken place there. Presently an exclamation of delight escaped her, for in the heart of the wood they came upon a place which seemed to her like fairyland. Tiny paths and rustic steps led up the steep banks, grey boulders and quaintly-shaped tree-stumps and mysterious caves and arches formed the background, and on every side rose the most beautiful ferns she had ever seen,—graceful “ladies,” sturdy male fern, dark-leaved holly-fern, delicate oak and beech, feathery parsley, long, drooping hart’s-tongues, and fringes of Killarney fern. At the far end of this fernery stood a miniature tower in grey stone, a summer-house known as the “Keep.” She had longed to see it; yet as Max took her in, she shivered, for the place, only lighted by two ivy-shaded windows, seemed dark and depressing; the horrible recollections that had for a minute been banished from her mind by the beauty of the fernery, came trooping back with double force.

“Do you think Mr. Desmond will get into trouble?” she asked.

“He most certainly will,” said Max, “unless we all four keep silence. Will you promise never to tell what you know?”

“I would not hurt him for the world,” said Doreen, “but please do let me tell my mother.”

“’Tis already known to too many people,” said Max;

"if more are to be told, it will be quite impossible to keep the matter secret."

"If I might just tell mother," pleaded Doreen, "it would be so much less hard to bear."

"Yes, yes, I can understand that," he said, faltering a little as the blue eyes searched his face wistfully. "Yet she is not strong, and the telling her, though a relief to you, could do no real good,—could, in fact, only trouble her very much."

Doreen's face fell. "I had forgotten that," she said. "Then may I not tell my father when I see him? He would never betray Mr. Desmond. Do let me just tell him!"

"But surely that would be very unwise," said Max. "The disappearance of this agent will be talked of all over the country, and your father—a Fenian just released from prison—would be far safer if he knew absolutely nothing about the matter and could swear that he was ignorant."

"We must not let him run any risk," she said gravely. "I must just bear it alone."

Great tears gathered in her eyes, and Max, cut to the heart by the child's grief, and the thought of the dreadful burden that he was putting upon her, caught her hand in his and held it tenderly. But this proved fatal; for there are times when the mere touch of a hand will open the flood-gates of emotion as no words could do. Doreen broke into a passionate fit of weeping.

"Oh," she sobbed, "I don't think I can ever be happy any more!"

"Don't cry, dear," he said, drawing her towards him. "You and I are in the same case, but perhaps in time

the memory of to-day will fade and grow less horrible. After all, we have done no wrong. It is our misfortune, not our fault."

The sense of his companionship in her trouble began to comfort her, but it was her practical good sense that checked her tears.

"I mustn't cry," she said, "or mother will guess something by my red eyes. I can't think how Ellen Montgomery managed; she cried between two and three hundred times in the 'Wide, Wide World,' for I counted up once, but she always seems to have looked natural and pretty; it never says that her eyes were as red as ferrets'."

Max smiled. It was cheering to him to think that Doreen's sunny nature would triumph even over this dark shadow that had crossed her path.

"You will swear to keep silence?" he said presently.

"I swear it," said Doreen, "by the cross of Christ."

"I also swear to keep silence," said Max, still keeping her hand in his as he repeated the words of the oath. Then he stooped down and kissed her, and felt her childish lips softly pressed to his cheek in a shy response.

Half an hour later Doreen, with a very wan little face, but a sturdy determination to keep her secret, opened the door of her mother's sitting-room.

"Why, my child, you are late," said Mrs. O'Ryan. "And how very tired you look! It has been too long an excursion for you."

"Oh no, mother," said Doreen. "I am a little tired and hungry; but it wasn't such a very long way, and we came back on a car."

"Tell them to bring in tea at once," said her mother. And Doreen, glad to escape, ran away, and having taken off her cloak and hat, studied herself critically in the looking-glass, then, with a dissatisfied exclamation, plunged her face into a basin of cold water and vigorously scrubbed her white cheeks with a rough towel. The worst of it was that tears would keep stealing up into her eyes, even now, in a fashion hitherto unknown to her. Indeed, though she little dreamt it, years were to elapse before her nerves quite recovered from the severe shock of that afternoon.

"Doreen has so much spirit," reflected her mother, "she would go till she dropped. But the child is certainly overtired. I must put a stop to these very long expeditions."

She had no idea that her simple questions about Lough Lee and the doings of that afternoon were taxing her little daughter's powers more than any number of additional miles could have done. No suspicion of any grave trouble was roused by Doreen's replies, and the two settled down to their usual game of cribbage, when the tea-things were removed, as composedly as though Foxell's body was not lying at the bottom of the lake.

By nine o'clock the child was in bed, but her sleep was uneasy and troubled by dreams. She woke shuddering with terror as the clock struck eleven. All was dark and still; they were an early household, and by this time everyone would be asleep. She sat up in bed, staring out into the darkness; had it, after all, been only a dream,—that frightful scene of a man falling back with distorted face, and sinking into the water, yet rising again close beside her? Alas! it was a dreadful reality.

She remembered everything distinctly now, and fell back again on the pillow in a paroxysm of the most agonising fear she had ever known. It was not the mere memory that terrified her, nor even the fear that John Desmond might be arrested; it was a wild, unreasoning fancy that the murdered man was close beside her. Every moment she dreaded to see his face looming out of the darkness, and she lay like one paralysed, hearing nothing but the throbbing of her heart, and not daring to close her eyes. Some would have found relief in drawing up the bedclothes and cowering down beneath them; but Doreen always preferred to face her fears. In the extremity of her misery she began to think whether she could summon up courage to rush to her mother's room, as she had sometimes done before in moments of panic. Then she remembered her oath, and the terror of breaking it drove out, for a moment, all other terrors.

"I must not go to mother," she said to herself. "She would certainly guess something. And yet, oh! how lovely it would be to creep into her bed and feel her arms round me! I should be asleep in two minutes, just as I was last time I was frightened in the night. But what if I talked in my sleep? What if I told the secret in my sleep? Oh! I shall never feel safe all my life! What shall I do! What shall I do!"

Again the horrible fancy that Foxell was close by made her teeth chatter, until at last, in desperation, she summoned up all her courage, and springing from the bed began to grope her way across the room in search of matches. The light was a wonderful relief, but there was not more than an inch of candle left. She set it on the mantelpiece and prayed that it might last till

daylight, with sad misgivings that she was asking an impossibility.

"I will think of other things," she said valiantly, and began to study with extreme care a marvellously worked sampler in a black frame which hung upon the wall. Hitherto she had only pitied the unlucky child who had been made to work it; now she set herself to read the words, which ran as follows:—

"In the glad morn of blooming youth
The various threads I drew,
And, pleased, beheld the finished piece
Rise glowing to the view.
Thus when bright youth shall charm no more,
And age shall chill my blood,
May I review my life and say,
Behold, my works were good!"

"Bridget O'Brien's work, finished in her tenth year, 1844."

"I shall never be like Bridget O'Brien, whoever she was," reflected Doreen, sadly. "I don't feel as if I should ever be able to say—'Behold, my works were good!'" And there will always be this dreadful memory at the beginning. The sampler wouldn't have looked very nice if someone had spilt a great blot of ink on it just as Bridget O'Brien had worked the first corner. There! I am thinking of it again! I will crowd it out. Let me see; I'll count the things in this sampler. There are rose-bushes up there, and trees like the ones in Michael's Noah's ark. And next come some queer-looking birds, grinning at each other across those pagodas. Then there's a brown cottage with a scarlet roof, and two great birds balancing on the two small chimneys, and looking down on that very green lawn strewn about

with red, white, and blue flowers. Then there's a pink bridge leading to a green hill, and on the top of the hill a blue and brown castle, and the Union Jack a great deal smaller than that enormous light-blue bird with a dark-blue head. Next there's a row of trees and flowers,—horrid to work, I'm sure. And down below there's a large brown house—poor Bridget, how she must have hated it! There are seven windows, a blue roof, a green door, and a yellow knocker. On the roof sit four big birds. To the right and left are apple-trees and rose-bushes, flanked by four cows, a dog, and a stag, all worked in sky-blue."

The clock in the kitchen struck twelve. Doreen shivered a little, and wished she had never read the lines about—

"'Tis now the very witching time of night,
When churchyards yawn, and hell itself breathes out
Contagion to this world."

Suddenly she remembered that under her pillow there was a little Irish book of prayers, called "The Key of Heaven," which she was in the habit of taking to bed with her because it belonged to her father and seemed like a link with him. Perhaps there might be something in that to quiet her fears. She seldom opened it, but now in her terror she drew it out, and, in turning over the pages, was, not unnaturally, arrested by the words, "Litany for the Dead." Surely it would be well to pray for the man who had gone with such awful suddenness to his doom. She knelt up in bed, using such of the sentences as pleased her best.

"Be merciful, O Lord, and pardon their sins. From

the shades of death, where the light of Thy countenance shineth not, deliver them, O Lord. By the multitude of Thy mercies, ever compassionate to human frailties, deliver them, O Lord.

“We sinners beseech thee to hear us.

“That the blessed view of Jesus may comfort them, and His unfading glory shine upon them. That the whole triumphant church may soon celebrate their deliverance, and the choirs of angels sing new hymns of joy on their never-ending happiness.”

Then she lay down again and tried to sleep, but in vain. The clock struck one. The candle flared in its socket, then once more darkness reigned. “If only the light would have lasted till dawn!” she thought, as the horror of her loneliness began again to overwhelm her.

But her prayer was, nevertheless, answered; for it was in the darkness and terror of that night that her spirit awoke to the recognition of all that had hitherto been to her mere matter of belief. Mrs. Hereford had sighed to think of the difficult life which probably lay before the sweet-voiced little girl. Max was even now chafing at the thought of the burden which Desmond’s rash act had brought upon one so young and innocent. They both forgot that with need comes power, and that to those of whom much is required, much is also given.

A whole night without sleep seems long to everyone, but to a child it seems well-nigh endless. Doreen no sooner heard the landlady stirring in the room above, than she sprang up and dressed, glad to remember that it was the day on which the washing was done and that Mrs. Keoghn would be hard at work at her wash-tub before sunrise. She had a craving to get out into the

open air, and astonished the good landlady by appearing at the kitchen door in her cloak and hat as the clock struck five.

"Sure, and whatever is it that you are afther, me dear?" she exclaimed.

"I was awake, and the morning is so fine that I mean to go up Kilrourk," said Doreen. "Please will Dan lend me the loan of his stick? The long one with the hooked handle."

"Sure, and it's proud he'll be if you'll use it," said Mrs. Keoghn, drying her hands on her apron. "And just you wait a bit, the while I cut you a little, small slice of bread; 'tis ill faring on an empty stomach."

Doreen thanked her, and running out at the back of the house, began slowly to make her way up the steep, grassy ascent, eating the bread as she walked. But the ground was wet with dew, and somehow the climb seemed toilsome; before she was a quarter of the way up she began to grow tired, and finding a plateau of smooth, short turf from which the grey rock cropped out here and there, she thought she would rest there, at anyrate for the present. To the left there was a little group of oaks and arbutus, while a few hundred yards in advance, on the extreme verge of the rocky summit of this first spur of the mountain, stood a solitary fir tree, its gaunt trunk and storm-twisted branches glowing ruddily in the light of dawn. She lay down among the rocks at the foot of an arbutus-tree, watching the tall fir with its dark green foliage standing out clearly against the strip of sky. Down below, among its verdant woods, she could see the grey turrets of Castle Karey, and the silvery brightness of the calm water, and

the glorious peaks of the mountains rising like the wings of guardian angels on the further shore. Far away, in the opposite direction, there lay, as she well knew, the gloomy Lough Lee; the light was breaking there too. She turned away with a shudder at the thought, and looked instead at all the lovely things close at hand,—the green turf and the little yellow tormentilla twisting about in all directions, and the tall, brown grasses with their shimmering spikes waving in the breeze, and the soft feathery moss half veiling the grey rocks. Then she noticed that the dark holly-bush close by had been suddenly glorified, every shining leaf becoming a mirror for the sun, as it rose majestically above the crest of the mountain. The beauty of the country seemed to steal into her heart as it had never done before; for the first time she fully realised that the land was her own.

“If only I can be worthy of it!” she thought to herself. “If only I can serve it! Keeping this secret is dreadful. I wish I had lived in the times of the Rebellion, or in ’48; there were lovely secrets to keep then, and real patriots to save and shelter. Yet Mr. Desmond was kind to poor Larry; he meant to help. How strange it seems that if only the agent had been just to old Larry, it never would have happened. Why are they so unwilling to be just to us Irish?”

But musing over that problem proved too much for the tired little brain. Doreen’s head sank lower and lower, till in a few minutes she was sleeping, like Jacob, with a stone for a pillow, and, doubtless, with angels to guard her, though she was too weary to dream of them.

CHAPTER IV.

“A man must grab whatever he can get;
We human creatures are not angels yet.
You must not stab, nor strangle, a poor neighbour,
For, if you did, why you would lose *his* labour;
No, take advantage of his cramped position
To mangle him with your cruellest condition.
Rob soul and body by superior wit
And fortune; ignorant hunger will submit.
If he should gash you, that were ugly murder:
Dribble his life-blood slowly—you’re in order.”

HON. RODEN NOEL.

WHEN John Desmond had dismissed the car at the Lodge on the previous afternoon, he made his way quickly to Castle Karey and went straight to the drawing-room, with the intention of telling Mrs. Hereford that he was obliged to go home that very evening. He found, however, that Miriam was the sole occupant of the room; she was leaning back in a great armchair, with “Vanity Fair” in her hand.

“You see,” she said, “I am dutifully obeying you and beginning to read Thackeray to improve my mind. But what is the matter?” for suddenly she observed the great change that had come over his expression, and she glanced from his troubled eyes to the letter which he held—a bill from Oxford, as it happened, but a missive which exactly suited his purpose.

“I have bad news,” he said hoarsely, “and am obliged to go home at once. The Lodge people put this letter into my hands as I passed,—they had been to Kilbeggan and had called for the afternoon post.

Do you know where Mrs. Hereford is? Can I speak to her?"

"Aunt has gone out," said Miriam. "As the afternoon kept fine, she drove to the Glebe House to see the Macgregors. Oh, I am so sorry for your trouble! Is it illness?"

"No," he said, his brow contracting. "A worse trouble, and one which will not bear talking of. It will force me to go; it will cut me off from you for ever."

The wild look in his eyes terrified Miriam.

"You must not say that!" she cried. "Nothing could do that, for we are—friends."

Her voice faltered; she laid her hand pleadingly on his arm, but he shrank away as if the touch were torture to him.

"There is one thing that must part us," he said vehemently, "and that is disgrace. Since you have been here, since I learned to love you, my life has been a dream of happiness. That is all over now. I must go home, and I beg you just to forget me."

"I cannot forget," said Miriam faintly.

"I implore you not to waste another thought on me!" he replied, with a vehemence which alarmed her. Then turning abruptly away he strode out of the room, leaving the girl perplexed and greatly troubled, almost inclined to think that the tutor must be going out of his mind. She went slowly upstairs to dress for dinner, and on returning to the drawing-room found her aunt full of concern about the news that Max had just brought to her.

"I have ordered dinner somewhat earlier, dear," she said as Miriam crossed the room. "You have heard

perhaps that Mr. Desmond is obliged to catch the nine o'clock train to-night."

"Does he go to-night?" said Miriam, her heart sinking.

"He is packing now; it is some family trouble, I am afraid, from the message he sent me," said Mrs. Hereford. She broke off as the butler approached her with something a little unusual in his well-regulated expression.

"If you please, ma'am, can Baptiste speak to you?"

"Certainly; send him in here," said Mrs. Hereford, and the next moment the French valet entered. He was a new acquisition and had won much favour in the household by his extreme good-nature; but he could neither speak nor apparently understand a word of English. With much excitement he now announced that his master begged Mrs. Hereford to come upstairs at once, for Mr. Desmond was seriously ill.

And so after all the flight from Castle Karey had to be abandoned; for by the time the nine o'clock train steamed out of Kilbeggan station the local doctor had pronounced without the least hesitation that the tutor was suffering from inflammation of the brain, probably caused by the shock he had undergone in receiving bad news from his home.

Max had insisted on sharing the night watch with his valet; and since Baptiste was known to have some experience of nursing, and proved extremely handy in the sick-room, the doctor seemed content, and left them with strict orders to keep the room perfectly quiet and to exclude all other people.

This was an injunction that the boy was ready enough

to obey; for he was in deadly terror lest Desmond should, in his delirium, let fall some word which would betray the secret of Foxell's death. He never stirred from his post till, at six the next morning, the doctor looked in again to see how his patient was progressing, and, finding Desmond asleep, took a cheerful view of the attack and spoke hopefully of the future.

"And now, sir," he said, laying a kindly hand on the boy's shoulder, "as you will be wanted when your friend wakes, I advise you to go and rest. Baptiste will keep out all intruders, and you look to me very much fagged."

Max was fain to own that he was tired, though not sleepy; his head ached miserably, and seeing that the day was bright and clear, he said he would walk up the avenue with the doctor. His companion put several questions to him, but they were all easy enough to answer, since they concerned Desmond's previous health.

They were so much absorbed in their talk, that they passed the Lodge and walked a little way along the high-road until Max was recalled to the present by the sight of the little grey lodging-house and of the landlady in her garden hanging up clothes to dry.

Mrs. Keoghn seemed delighted to catch sight of them; she came to her gate, without even pausing to hang up the wet shirt she held in her hands.

"Good morning to ye, gintlemen," she said. "Have ye heard the news that's goin' round about the agent?"

"What news?" said the doctor. Max struggled desperately to express nothing but a half-careless curiosity, though his heart beat like a sledge-hammer.

"They say he never came back yesterday, and his

wife is onaisy in her mind, and thinks he has been made away with; and for the matther of that, it's well hated he is by many a one, the cold-hearted crathur! She will have it that the Fenians have been and murthered him."

"Pooh!" said the doctor. "There are no Fenians about here. Are the police taking it up yet?"

"Sure, and they are, sir. The country is to be searched for him, and all the village is astir about it. Mrs. Foxell won't give them a moment's peace till he's found; one would think they had been the best o' friends, but sure and I've heard the folk say they were a rare quarrelsome couple, and that she had a scolding tongue. Maybe that soured the agent's temper and made him harder to the tenants."

"I must go and hear about it," said the doctor cheerfully. "But depend upon it, the fellow will turn up all right. When was he last at the Castle, Mr. Hereford?"

"I heard that he was there in the morning," said Max. "I believe my mother saw him."

"Well, good-morning to you," said the doctor. "Why, your hand is cold; you are not so used to being up all night as I am. Take a brisk walk,—nothing like a walk before breakfast for the circulation."

He turned away, but Max lingered a moment longer beside the gate. "Miss Doreen was not over-tired yesterday, I hope?" he asked.

"Bless you, no, sir," replied the landlady. "Why, she was off at five o'clock this morning, runnin' up the mountain yonder as brisk as could be."

With a strong desire to know how the sharer of his miserable secret was bearing her burden, Max followed

the direction which Mrs. Keoghn had indicated and began to climb Kilrourk. He had not gone far when he descried the red cloak among the moss-grown rocks to the left, and, stealing quietly over the dewy turf, saw that the child was fast asleep. Her little peaceful face touched his heart strangely; he bent down and kissed her softly and reverently on the forehead. Doreen smiled in her sleep and, feeling for his hand, held it closely in both her own. The clasp of her fingers on his had a curious effect on him; spite of all the misery and fear which had oppressed him only a few minutes before, Doreen seemed witching him into a content as blissful and dreamlike as her own. Just at that moment, a thrush alighted on the arbutus-tree above them, and his song roused the child. Her dark-blue eyes looked right into Max Hereford's with a smile of recognition.

"I was dreaming of you," she said, with a direct simplicity which confused him a little.

"I found you sleeping on the mountain with your crook at your side, like Little Bo-Peep," he replied laughing.

Doreen, with a puzzled face, looked at the crooked stick lying on the turf among the little yellow flowers of the tormentilla; she looked at the storm-twisted boughs of the fir-tree; she looked across the glen to the mountains beyond, and then with a shudder and a sudden look of dismay and fear, she sprang to her feet as the recollection of Lough Lee and the sinking agent returned to her.

"Oh!" she said, with a sob in her throat, "will it always come back to one like that? Is it only in dreams that we can be quite at rest?"

"I am so sorry for you, dear," he said, taking her hand in his as they climbed higher up the mountain. "Has the night been very hard for you, too?"

"I couldn't sleep," said Doreen. "And the dark was dreadful! I kept on thinking I should see—you know what."

"Poor little soul! you were quite alone, then?"

"I thought of going to mother; but then, you know, she might have guessed, or I might have told the secret in my sleep. Afterwards God talked to me, and it was better," she concluded abruptly, with the instinctive reserve which veils all that is most sacred. There was a pause. Max looked down at the little, tired, white face with a sort of wondering admiration. "Then," continued Doreen, "I climbed up here and saw the sunrise for the first time, and the country looked so beautiful! I never knew before how much I loved it. Oh! I am so glad God made me Irish, but I do wish He had made me a boy; then, when I grew up, I could serve the country."

"What would you do?" asked Max, smiling at her eagerness.

"I would speak," she cried, her eyes flashing; "I would make the English understand how different things are over here—would make them long to see justice shown to Ireland, as mother says they longed to see justice shown to Italy. They were ready enough, mother said, to make much of Garibaldi; but my father, only for what he had written and for belonging to the Fenians, was thrust into prison."

"If you can't be a second Daniel O'Connell, you can, I should think, be the national singer," said Max.

Doreen sighed. "Do you think I could?" she said.

"Yet, even if it were possible, all that is so indirect. How I wish I were you—rich, and a man, and with the power to speak."

"How do you know I have the power?" asked the boy, half amused, half startled by her tone of conviction.

"I have known it ever since that day you took me first in your boat; don't you remember how after the picnic you and Mr. Desmond and Miss Hereford made speeches for fun? The others were as silly as could be, but you made us really laugh and really cry; and when you told the legend of the Castle, it made me shiver all down my back like lovely music. Why should we not have a nice secret between us, and a nice promise!" she exclaimed, her face lighting up. "Let us plan that you shall go into Parliament when you are older, and promise me that you will speak for Ireland."

He smiled at her enthusiasm.

"My mother would like nothing better than that I should stand a few years hence for Firdale; but if I adopt your principles, there would be small chance of my getting in. I will promise, though, to speak for Ireland if ever I have the power and the chance."

And vague dreams of a far-away future began to float before him as Doreen climbed Kilrourk at his side, chanting to herself her favourite song,—

" 'God save Ireland,' said the heroes;
 'God save Ireland,' said they all;
 'Whether on the scaffold high,
 Or the battle-field we die,
Oh, what matter, when for Erin dear we fall!' "

"Why, in England they call your heroes the Manchester murderers," said Max.

"Yes," said Doreen. "But we Irish call it murder to hang three men because one policeman was accidentally shot. Had a policeman burst open a lock with a pistol, and an Irishman chanced to be behind the door, would they have called *that* a murder, do you suppose? How well I remember walking in the funeral procession in Dublin that was got up in their honour! There were two thousand of us children, and in the whole procession twenty-five thousand people."

"Then they were buried in Ireland?"

"Oh no! in quicklime in the prison graveyard," said Doreen. "But that doesn't matter at all; your own great patriots were mostly dishonoured after death—dug up, you know, by their opponents and gibbeted. The Manchester martyrs live on in the hearts of the Irish people."

Max had been diverted for the time from his anxieties by the little girl's eager words, but a cloud of care settled down upon him as once more he reached Castle Karey.

That afternoon when, after spending many hours with his tutor, he had just had the satisfaction of seeing him fall asleep, a low knock was heard at the door, and Baptiste, who had been dozing for a few minutes, stole with cat-like tread across the room to ask what was needed. Looking up, Max saw that his mother stood in the doorway, beckoning to him.

"I want you down in the library for a few minutes," she said, as he joined her in the passage, noiselessly closing the door behind him. "A most extraordinary

thing has happened. Mr. Foxell, the agent, disappeared yesterday, and not a trace of him is to be found. Two constables and a detective are down below, and they want to put a few questions to you as to when you last saw the poor man. It is thought likely that he has been murdered."

Max made an inarticulate exclamation. To one of his highly nervous temperament the prospect of the interview was appalling; the dread of ruining his friend and the dread of lying made his heart throb with a horrible anxiety such as he had never before known. He walked on steadily, trying to think that he was going to shield the man who had been to him friend as well as tutor, yet with a faint perception even then that John Desmond's noblest course of action would have been to surrender himself, and plead guilty to manslaughter in a moment of frenzy. They could scarcely have called the affair wilful murder, and the tutor's impulse to disappear and save Mrs. Hereford and Miriam from all the wretchedness of being mixed up in such a case was perhaps more chivalrous than wise or honest. Doreen's talk about the men who had been hung for rescuing the Fenian prisoners returned to him, however, unpleasantly.

"At least my part is clear," he said to himself, as these thoughts rushed through his mind. "I have sworn secrecy, and must at all costs hold my tongue, however much I may wish that he would have confessed to it himself."

By this time they had reached the library; he opened the door for his mother, and followed her into the room, nodding to the constables, whom he knew by sight, and bowing to the keen-eyed, somewhat cadaverous-looking

man in plain clothes, to whom Mrs. Hereford introduced him. The detective was disappointed to find such a very young, boyish-looking Mr. Hereford. A fresh-faced, genial, good-tempered schoolboy, he thought to himself, imagining as he looked into Max Hereford's well-opened, fearless eyes, that he could read him like a book.

"I need not trouble you with many questions, sir," he said; "you will have heard from Mrs. Hereford of the disappearance of Lord Byfield's agent, Mr. James Foxell?"

"Yes," said Max. "My mother has just been telling me about it."

"You had heard nothing of it before, I suppose?" He looked him through and through as he put this question.

"Yes," said Max; "I was walking outside the grounds early this morning with the doctor, and Mrs. Keoghn told me that the village was all astir about it."

"And yet you said nothing about it on returning home? How was that?" said the detective.

"I purposely said nothing," said Max steadily. "My mother is not strong, and I knew the story would trouble her and make her nervous."

"I see that this boy is older and more thoughtful than I imagined at first sight of him," thought the detective. "By-the-bye, Mr. Hereford," he said, "can you throw any light on Foxell's movements yesterday?"

"I heard that he was here at the Castle at nine o'clock," said Max, marvelling at his own composure. "But you have probably been able to trace him later than that?"

"Yes; his wife saw him at ten, but further than that

we can get no clue. He told her to expect him at seven in the evening, and, as you know, never returned. Did you see him yesterday?"

"When he was here? No; I merely heard that he had called to speak to my mother."

"When did you last have speech with him?"

Max paused for a moment; his breath came fast, but he still maintained a sort of ghastly composure; then remembering that on the fatal afternoon he had only exchanged words with old Larry and his wife, and that it had been Desmond who had remonstrated throughout with the agent, he said quietly, "I don't think I have spoken to him since Sunday as we came out of church."

With that his ordeal ended, and with relief he found that his mother was urging him to go out, and speaking of some commission which she wanted him to see to at Kilbeggan.

"I will order the car to be brought round at once," she said. "You will be doing a service to Mr. Desmond by fetching this medicine, and already you look quite ill with sitting so much in his room."

Max made no objection to the plan, and as he drove along the mountain road, the difficult problem filled his mind, was it a greater evil to tell a lie or to break an oath? He was thankful that by the wording of the detective's questions he had just been able to steer clear of either course, and yet to keep the man at bay, but the strain of the interview had been great, and he dreaded above all things to be put through a second examination. Little Doreen would at anyrate be saved from that. And as his thoughts turned to her once more, an idea struck him and he drove to no less than three shops in Kil-

beggan in search of a certain present which he had set his heart on giving her.

The nightly game of cribbage was going on in the little parlour that evening, when Mrs. Keoghn entered with the lamp in one hand and a parcel in the other.

"Nothing has been heard of the agent, ma'am," she remarked. "I make no doubt he's come to some dreadful end."

"Oh, I hope not," said Mrs. O'Ryan, endeavouring to hush up the good landlady, as she noticed that Doreen's eyes had a startled look in them, and that her lips grew white. "What is that parcel?"

"Sure, thin, ma'am, 'tis for Miss Doreen; Mr. Hereford has just left it; he's been to Kilbeggan."

"See, mother," said Doreen, recovering her self-possession. "It is the present he owed me. We had a double cherry at the picnic last week, and I was the first to speak the next day."

Hastily unfolding the paper, she saw with delight a bronze crucifix, and beneath it, hanging by chains to the two arms of the cross, a tiny bronze lamp, with the wick already prepared, and a slip of paper with the comforting assurance that when filled the lamp would burn seven hours. The dread of a second night which had been weighing upon her all day passed away now; and perhaps no gift ever given her brought such a rapture of relief and pleasure, or filled her with such intense gratitude to the donor.

CHAPTER V.

"Be my epitaph writ on my country's mind,
'HE SERVED HIS COUNTRY, AND LOVED MANKIND.' "

THOMAS DAVIS.

"How much time do you give me, doctor?"

The questioner lay in one of the berths of a state-room on an Atlantic steamer; he was a man of sixty, though his deeply-lined face and silvery hair made him look older. His hollow cheeks and emaciated form told their own tale, and so did the over-bright eyes, which now looked keenly into the doctor's embarrassed face.

"I fear, Mr. O'Ryan, that the time is but short,—that you can scarcely hope to reach England."

The sick man laughed.

"And I don't know that I should break my heart about that," he said in a tone free from all bitterness, and full of a humour which at such a time struck the doctor as pathetic. "England, you know, was my prison-house for five years. Will I live to reach Queenstown, do you think?"

The doctor shook his head.

"My dear sir, if you will have the plain truth, I fear that it is but a question of hours. Is there anything I can do for you?"

The dying man sighed. "Send Doreen to me," he said, "and tell my wife that I am now free from pain. Is there no possibility of letting me see her?"

"I am sorry, but it is out of the question," said the doctor decidedly. "For the children's sake, you would

not let her run any risk. I will send your daughter to you."

Patrick O'Ryan thanked him courteously, and lay with closed eyes, musing over the past, certain lines of patient endurance first traced by the years in Portland Prison becoming more distinctly visible about his mouth. He had faced death too often to fear it, and the manner of his death pleased him well enough. He knew that he should take his place in that long line of patriots who have laid down their lives for Ireland. Nearly six years ago he had come out of gaol with his health undermined,—now with unexpected suddenness the end had come, just as he was leaving America for London, there to embark on fresh and congenial work, and to enjoy Doreen's first appearance as a public singer.

The sound of someone at the door made him open his keen blue eyes. He saw at a glance that the doctor had told his daughter the truth; for Doreen's face, which had been singularly young and girlish for her eighteen years, had strangely altered; it was stamped now with a look of grief and care which went to his heart.

"Child," he said, taking her hand in his, "you must not fret over me. Is there a priest on board?"

"No, father," she said, with deep regret; for she knew that he, as a devout Roman Catholic, would feel the deprivation in a way which she, who had been brought up to share her mother's opinions, could not fully enter into.

"Well, it can't be helped," he replied. "It sometimes happens on the battle-field that two soldiers have

to confess to each other." And with his hands folded between hers he made his shrift.

"Oh, if I, too, could tell father what happened at Lough Lee!" thought Doreen. "Might I rightly break my oath to ask advice of one who is leaving the world?"

The temptation was strong, but she thought of Max Hereford's words in the fernery, and was silent. Gradually, too, all her thoughts became absorbed in her father's words; when he had ended, there was a long silence. Nothing was to be heard save the swish of the waves against the steamer, and the ceaseless throbbing of the engine, which to her fancy seemed eternally playing the tune of "God save Ireland." There had been something pathetic in the extreme simplicity of the confession to which she had listened. This rebel, who had twice tried unsuccessfully to free his country from oppression, failing because he had tried in mistaken ways and before the times were ripe,—had not only the devoted courage which characterises the pioneers of all great movements, but he had, what is much more rare, a perfectly childlike faith.

"I have been thinking," he said, "it will save much trouble if my funeral be at sea. Don't shrink so, mavourneen. What does it matter? I would sooner lie at the bottom of the Atlantic than in an English grave, and it would be but an ill opening for your public career, to have all the Irish in Liverpool trooping to the funeral of O'Ryan the ex-convict."

"We shall touch at Queenstown," she faltered.

"Yes; and were Ireland freed from her chains, I might feel differently. As it is—let me be buried at

sea. Some day when this new scheme ripens, and Home Rule brings peace to our land, why, you can build me a fine monument at Glasnevin in the O'Connell circle." He smiled and stroked her cheek. "Oh, it's great things I expect of you," he added tenderly, while her tears fell fast. "Your voice and your good courage will serve the children in this strait, and will serve old Ireland, too, if I mistake not. Do you remember the last time we were together at Glasnevin? It was but a few days before my arrest; I taught you to know the blackbird's note, and we looked together at the graves of the patriots, and you learnt Ellen O'Leary's poem and said it to me once when you came to see me at Kilmainham; don't you remember it?—

"I'm very sure, if right took place, we'd all have full and plenty;
The landlords live upon our toil, and leave us bare and empty."

There followed some hours of great weakness and weariness, in which the sweet-natured patience which had always characterised Patrick O'Ryan's personal character, shone out radiantly. Early in the morning, when the doctor had paid his visit and had gone to report progress to the poor invalid wife, who was too ill to be moved, Doreen and Michael, who were keeping watch beside the dying man, heard him make a faint request.

"Something of Newman's," he said dreamily.

And Doreen, taking up a book from the open portmanteau close at hand, read a poem which she knew to be a favourite with her father,—a poem which perhaps naturally appealed to one whose life had been

made up of hard fighting and crushing disappointment, ending with a far-distant yet confident hope.

“When I sink down in gloom or fear,
Hope blighted or delay’d,
Thy whisper, Lord, my heart shall cheer,
‘Tis I, be not afraid!’

“Or startled at some sudden blow,
If fretful thoughts I feel,
‘Fear not, it is but I,’ shall flow
As balm my wound to heal.

“Nor will I quit Thy way, though foes
Some onward pass defend;
From each rough voice the watchword goes,
‘Be not afraid! . . . a friend!’

“And oh! when judgment’s trumpet clear
Awakes me from my grave,
Still in its echo may I hear,
‘Tis Christ; He comes to save.’”

As she ended, his eye opened for a minute, and Doreen bent down to listen to a brief whispered message for her mother; then, having kissed them both, he lay at rest for some time, a sort of drowsiness stealing over him till just as eight bells rang his lips moved, and Doreen again bent forward, thinking that he wanted something.

She caught the words,—“God save Ireland!”
They were the last he spoke.

For the next few days Doreen felt like one in a horrible dream. But the glimpse of the beautiful harbour at Queenstown, with its wide welcoming shores, its indescribable look of home, roused her and drew her back to the actual needs of the present. As they approached England, she became more and more absorbed

in the manifold arrangements for her mother's comfort, and in the care of Dermot, Mollie, and the baby,—the three little ones who had been born during those happy years at New York.

Already it seemed to her a long, long time since she had stood with Michael on the deck, listening to the words of the burial service read by the captain, and watching the great Atlantic waves as they surged over her father's body and hid it from view.

Sorrow and anxiety, and long nights of watching with her mother, had robbed her cheek of its colour and sobered the dancing blue eyes; nevertheless there was still a look of unquenchable youth and spirit in the face, which made the careworn lines about the lips seem nothing but a mistake.

"How soon shall we be in, dear?" asked Mrs. O'Ryan faintly, from her berth, glancing a little anxiously at the wild confusion which prevailed in the state-room.

"They said it would be half an hour just now, mother," said Doreen, seizing on books, clothes, and music, and crowding them into a much-enduring carpet-bag; then, pausing to catch up little Bride, the baby of six months old, she hastily averted an impending cry with a snatch of "The Meeting of the Waters."

She sang brightly, so brightly that one might have fancied her heart was as light as it had been six years before when she sang to the Herefords at Castle Karey.

"Little time-waster!" she said tenderly, as she put the child down on the floor again between two small people of five and three. "Now play with Dermot and

Mollie, there's a doat, and leave me the use of my hands, for in truth they've enough to do."

Just then there came a tap at the cabin door, and a brisk, cheery-looking American woman entered. She must have been about forty, but looked younger, owing to her trim figure, and fresh, rosy cheeks with their high cheek-bones; her hard, shiny, bright face always reminded Doreen of a well-polished apple, while her eyes, small, dark, and twinkling, were like the eyes of a robin.

"Can I help you, miss?" she asked; and scarcely waiting for permission or thanks she began to do everything that had to be done, strapping bags and portmanteaux, dressing the baby, and chatting to little Dermot and Mollie, while Doreen was set free to wait on her mother, who looked very unfit for the move on shore.

Hagar Muchmore was migrating from her New England home to Liverpool to visit her only son, who, somewhat to his mother's dismay, had married on his twenty-first birthday a woman several years his senior. The news had perturbed Hagar, and she had resolved to cross the Atlantic and see for herself whether the match were satisfactory or not. The villagers at Salem had remonstrated with her for wasting her money on such an expedition, but Hagar thought peace in the heart was worth more than gold in the bank; she drew out her savings and started for England, enjoying the thought of the pleasant surprise she was preparing for her boy.

The crossing would, however, have been both dull and lonely for her had it not been for the great interest she had taken in the O'Ryan's. Many people had sym-

pathised with them, had patted the children on the head, or filled Michael's pockets with chocolate, or said kind words to Doreen. But Hagar Muchmore had thrown her whole heart into the sorrows of these fatherless children, had identified herself with them, had waited on Mrs. O'Ryan as though she had been her own maid, and had learnt to love them almost as much as though she had nursed them and cared for them all their lives.

"The doctor says my mother must not travel to London yet," said Doreen. "He has told us of rooms in Grove Street, where the terms would not be very high. Do you know whether it is far from the landing-quay?"

"No, miss," said Hagar; "I'm as new to this country as you are. But I can find out from the stewardess. And I'm thinking I would just as soon come round with you there and settle you in before going to my son; for he'll not be back from his work till night, I guess, and I'm in no such haste to see his wife."

Doreen's face lighted up.

"Oh, what a comfort you will be!" she said. "I was wondering how I should ever manage with the little ones and yet be free to help my mother. How kind everyone is!"

She took little Mollie in her arms and carried her on deck, receiving friendly farewells from several of the passengers, and soon descrying Michael, not as she had expected, however, among his friends the sailors, but standing apart looking with wistful eyes at the crowded landing-quay.

"Will you mind Mollie for a minute, while I see to the others?" she said, noticing that there were tears in the brown eyes that looked anxiously up at her.

"Doreen!" he exclaimed. "I heard that old lady with the curls telling her husband that mother would never be better; she said it would be a dreadful thing for you to be—to be left—with all those children on your hands."

"Nonsense!" said Doreen hastily, yet with an odd choking in her throat. "She knows nothing about it. Mother may be much the better for the change, and for seeing auntie. I shall write to auntie to-night and beg her to come to Liverpool, as we can't go straight to London."

Michael looked relieved, but his burden seemed to have transferred itself to Doreen, who went back to the stateroom with an aching heart and a mind full of heavy forebodings. She seemed to see her mother now with different eyes, for the first time fully realising how worn and thin her face had become during the last few days, and how slight a hold she seemed to have of the world.

"People always look worse when they first wear their walking-things," she said to herself. "It is the bonnet that makes her look so ill, and the excitement of landing that has brought that horrid little flush to her cheeks. Oh, Dr. Lewis, have you come to help us? That is very good of you!" she exclaimed, as the ship's doctor entered with the steward's mate behind him.

"We'll get Mrs. O'Ryan on shore if you will see to your little people on deck," said the doctor. "Young Vanheim is attending to your luggage, so you need not have any anxiety about that."

"And I'll see to the baby," said Hagar Muchmore,

skirmishing round the stateroom in search of anything that might be left, like a kindly bird of prey.

So with good-natured help and friendly farewells and much sympathy the sad little group was set on shore, and Doreen, looking at the busy streets of Liverpool, fancied that, after all, this strange country had a sort of homelike air, and that she should soon grow to love it. Thanks to the doctor's recommendation, they had no difficulty in getting rooms, and before long Hagar Muchmore had settled the four children round a comfortable tea-table, which, as she remarked, would keep them quiet for a good half-hour; and Doreen, having helped her mother to bed, was able to write to her aunt, Mrs. Garth. She snatched up pen and paper, but somehow to begin was a difficult matter. Some letters are hard to write, from dearth of anything to say; others are hard because there is so much that must be said,—such ill news to convey, such sorrow to restrain, such fear for the future that must be hinted at, yet not too clearly expressed. Doreen opened her inkstand, then she sat with her head resting on her hands, vainly struggling to clothe her thoughts in words. Roused at length by the remembrance that there was no time to be lost, she forced herself to write the brief lines which should summon Mrs. Garth to Liverpool.

“MY DEAR AUNTIE:—We have just arrived in England and are in sad trouble. My father had an attack of spasms of the heart and died two days after leaving New York; and mother, who was never very strong, and who has been, as you know, since Bride was born, quite an invalid, seems as if she could not rally from this great shock. The doctor will not hear of letting her travel to London, but she has counted very much on seeing you, and begs that, if possible, you will come to us here. I think she will not rest till she has seen

you; so that if you could come at once, it would be a great comfort.
Your affectionate niece, DOREEN O'RYAN."

Hagar Muchmore posted the letter when she set off in search of her son's home, and poor Doreen, feeling very desolate and burdened, despatched Michael to keep guard in his mother's room, and set to work to put the three little ones to bed, having desperate hunts for straying night-gowns and lost brushes and combs, and sighing many a time and oft, to think that in the matter of orderliness she should have failed to inherit the least trace of her mother's nature, and should have been wholly Irish.

"But at anyrate I can keep them in good humour by singing," she reflected, and spite of all the sorrow that filled her heart she sang whatever Dermot and Mollie begged for, from "Come back to Erin" to "Kate O'Shane," and finally left them sleeping as happily as though one great sorrow had not just passed into their lives while a fresh one stood waiting at the threshold.

But when her own work was done, when the landlady had been interviewed and provisions ordered, and Michael cheered with hopeful words and tucked up in bed, proud to think himself in charge of the little ones, Doreen was so weary that to sleep was impossible. She lighted her little night-lamp and then lay down beside her mother, aching in every limb and with ears still on the alert to catch any sounds from her small charges in the next room, yet afraid in her restless wakefulness to stir, lest the sleep into which the invalid had fallen should be broken. It was all very well to speak hopefully to Michael, but the fears that had troubled the boy's heart began now to trouble her, to force themselves upon her

notice, to refuse to be stifled as she had hitherto contrived to stifle them.

And then all the dreams, the ambitious plans, of her girlhood came back to her with a bitter sense that just as they were beginning to become practical possibilities, her desire for them had faded utterly away. What did she care now for the chance of becoming a great public singer? The mother who was to have enjoyed her triumph was dying. What could she care now for the rights of Ireland, when the father whose sufferings had wrung her heart would not be there to rejoice in the progress of the cause? The rain came driving against the window, the wind howled drearily down the narrow street, and Doreen lay looking at the familiar shadow cast by the crucifix on the wall and wondering if all her life it would happen that the good things so long waited, so eagerly hoped for, should come invariably hand in hand with sorrow. Very vividly she remembered how, when at length her father's imprisonment had ended and they had met him once more, the happiness of the reunion had been most sadly marred by the dreadful secret that had been weighing on her heart. Time had softened to some extent the misery of the remembrance of that afternoon on Lough Lee; it had ceased to be a continual burden to her, for her nature was too buoyant to be crushed for very long, and, fortunately, she was not given to brooding over anything. Still, there were times when the past became fearfully vivid, times when she was filled with a most dreadful craving to see Max Hereford once more,—the one person in the world to whom she might speak of what had passed on that last day of her childhood.

"My darling," said Mrs. O'Ryan, opening her eyes and taking the girl's hand in hers, "I am afraid you have not slept. You are sadly tired. What is the time? I am feeling so much better."

"The clock has just struck two, mother; you have had a longer sleep than usual."

"I thought so," said the invalid. "Lie still, dear; I want nothing. What was the name, Doreen, of those people at Castle Karey? I have been dreaming about them."

"Their name was Hereford," said Doreen, glancing at the crucifix. "Mr. Hereford always sends Christmas cards to Michael and me. I believe he must still think I am quite a little girl, for last year it was a picture of a robin singing to a harp; just an absurd thing, more fit for Dermot or Mollie than for me!"

"Where did they live in England?" asked Mrs. O'Ryan.

"Somewhere in the South, I think," said Doreen. "Firdale was the name of their nearest town."

"I had a dream that they were very good to you," said her mother. "I wish it may come true, for I am leaving you with but few friends and with many cares."

"Oh, mother, don't talk like that!" said Doreen, tears choking her voice.

"I should like to be spared to my children; but, in any case," (she stroked Doreen's hand tenderly,) "it does not bring death nearer to speak of what may happen. Your father has left Donal Moore his sole executor; he will help and advise you about the children: there is not a kinder, better man living. It would, of course, be possible for me to leave your uncle and aunt co-

guardians, but I think it will be better not. To them Donal Moore is no doubt only a dangerous agitator, newly released from prison; they might not work well together. I would rather that you and Donal shared the guardianship of the little ones, though I know auntie will always be ready to help you, and you will naturally turn to her in any trouble."

"What is Uncle Garth like?" asked Doreen. "I can't recall him well."

"I know very little of him, save that he is a good, honest man, clever and very silent. The Garths were Tories of the old school, a delightful family, full of old-fashioned hospitality; they sadly disapproved of my marriage, but were very kind to me, for all that. Yet, somehow, I cannot think that Uncle Garth and Donal Moore could ever pull together, specially as your uncle is a strong Protestant, and as the boys must be brought up in their father's faith according to our agreement. If they do come across each other, you will have to play the part of peacemaker."

"My temper is too hot for that part," said Doreen. "It is you, mother, who will manage to bring them together and smoothe the rough places."

Mrs. O'Ryan sighed.

"If I live," she said, "I doubt whether I can be anything but a burden and an expense, and God knows there is little enough for you all to live upon."

"Oh, mother, mother, don't!" sobbed Doreen. "Have I not got my voice that the maestro told us would some day make our fortune? And what do I care for it if you are not here?"

"The thought that at least you have that is my great

comfort," said Mrs. O'Ryan. "A sweet voice, a good training, and a brave heart,—with these you are left to face the world and to support four children. Michael is but twelve, and can be nothing but an expense to you for many years. It is a terrible burden to leave to a girl of eighteen."

"It would be far worse without the children, mother; at least I shall have them to work for: it will seem worth while," said Doreen. "Besides, father said something of money invested in some railway."

"It is very little," said Mrs. O'Ryan; "it would not realise more than four hundred pounds. Donal Moore will see to that for you, and God grant it may keep you until you begin to earn money enough for your needs. It is strange how vividly I dream now. It still seems almost like something that really happened, that talk with Mrs. Hereford and her son; I should like to think you would come across them again. It must have been, I suppose, some remembrance of the old days when he used to come and persuade me to let you go with them on some expedition, but I seemed to hear his voice saying, just as he used to then: 'I will take such care of her.' What became of that tutor who was taken ill with brain fever?"

"He was getting better when we left, they said," replied Doreen; "but since then I have heard nothing about him."

She pressed her lips tightly together, for once more there came upon her the old, burning desire to tell everything to her mother. The unreasoning wish was all the more difficult to resist because of her exhausted state, while the sense that the time left to her was short,

that soon all chance of unburdening her mind would be over, weighed upon her with an intolerable oppression. Could it be wrong to tell now, to unburden her soul to one who was leaving the world, to win that counsel and sympathy for which she craved so terribly?

The temptation was strong, so strong that again and again it nearly overmastered her. Was she to fight so desperately all for the sake of a stranger who, for aught she knew, might be dead? Was she to be silent now when probably all danger was over? Had she, indeed, ever been right to keep such a thing from her mother? "Help me, God! Help me, God!" she cried desperately; and, as if in answer, there rose before her a vision of the lovely fernery at Castle Karey, and of the little Keep, and of Max Hereford's clear, truthful eyes, as he repeated the words of the oath, and, stooping down, kissed her for the first time.

"I will be true," she said, and, venturing to raise herself a little on her elbow, she looked at her mother and found that in the long silence she had again fallen asleep quite tranquilly. Into the girl's sanguine heart there instantly rushed a glad thought: "I have been true to God; perhaps—oh, perhaps—He will, after all, spare mother to us."

CHAPTER VI.

“Sweet thoughts, bright dreams, my comforts be,
All comfort else has flown;
For every hope was false to me,
And here I am alone.
What thoughts were mine in early youth!
Like some old Irish song,
Brimful of love, and life, and truth,
My spirit gushed along.”

THOMAS DAVIS.

DOREEN'S letter arrived in Bloomsbury the next morning, and lay on the breakfast table to greet the mistress of the house, without any black border to herald its contents. At sight of the Liverpool postmark, Aunt Garth caught it up eagerly, and over her worn and somewhat sad face there flitted a smile of content.

“They have landed, then!” she exclaimed, “and to-day I shall see Mary again after all these years of separation!”

In outward appearance the two sisters were much alike; but Mrs. Garth, though her life had apparently been much less trying, looked, nevertheless, sadder than Mrs. O’Ryan, who, spite of poverty and sorrow, and the long imprisonment of her husband, had retained a marvellous youthfulness and buoyancy which was lacking in her sister. There was something very winning, however, in Aunt Garth’s face; a sort of quiet strength was the first thing that impressed all who observed her, but scarcely anyone really knew her: she lived a life apart, even while forming the very centre and mainspring of her household. Some people were bold enough to

question whether even Uncle Garth himself really understood her, and perhaps he did not, being a man who accepted the great facts of life with the unquestioning faith of a child, and probably troubling himself very little about them. He was a good man and a good husband, but the enthusiasm of his nature spent itself in his daily work at the British Museum, and ancient Egypt was far more real to him than modern England, while as to Ireland, it was to him as Prince Metternich would have said,—merely “a geographical expression.” Egyptology, however, had not at all interfered with his kindness of heart; absent and preoccupied he might be, but if once roused to the perception that other people needed his help, nothing could exceed his readiness to serve them.

He was in a particularly absent mood that morning, his mind being full of some recent discoveries made at Alexandria, and his wife knew that it would be of no use attempting to make him listen to anything until he had opened the letter with the Egyptian stamp which awaited him. His dreamy grey eyes lighted up as he caught sight of the little view of the pyramid and the Sphinx upon his plate, and Aunt Garth went quietly about the table, cutting bread and putting eggs in the egg-boiler and pouring out coffee, with now and then a rather wistful glance towards the grey head bent over the sheets of large foreign paper. There is a popular notion that antiquarians and men of science are all shaggy, wild-looking, and unkempt; but Uncle Garth—possibly owing to his wife’s exertions—was a particularly well-clothed, well-brushed man, and had an indefinable air of good preservation, from his closely cropped grey head and short grey beard to his faultless boots.

"I have had a letter from Doreen, dear," said Mrs. Garth, when at length the letter from Egypt was folded up and a possible pause in Uncle Garth's reflections arrived, owing to the necessity of decapitating an egg,—a ceremony which he always performed with scrupulous care after a peculiar method of his own invention. "She writes from Liverpool in great trouble, for her father died during the voyage."

"What! Patrick dead!" exclaimed Uncle Garth, with a look of concern. "Poor fellow,—poor fellow! What a wasted life! And your sister and those five children but ill provided for, I am afraid."

"I should fear there can be very little for them, though I know they left America free from debt and were hopeful about some appointment which he had got in London as correspondent to one of the Irish papers," said Mrs. Garth. "Several times Mary has written of his failing health; he has never really been well since he was in prison," she said; "being ill-fitted to stand the rough work he had to do, and fretting his heart out all those five years about her and the little ones. There were only the two of them then,—Doreen and little Michael. I remember staying with them just after Michael's birth, when you were in Egypt,—it must have been the year before he was arrested,—and his devotion to the children was wonderful to see. Doreen used to follow him about everywhere like a little shadow."

"It's a sad business," said Uncle Garth reflectively. "He was a very good fellow and pleasant enough to talk with, but with this unlucky craze about Irish rights. I remember well the very last talk I had with him when he was full of the national rights and the national duties,

and I plainly pointed out to him that Ireland being wedded to England had ceased to be a nation, that it had no separate rights, that it was in fact in the position of a wife. But these Irish fellows are so impracticable, one might as well have talked to the winds. Hopelessly perverse and headstrong, the whole race of them!"

Aunt Garth smiled ever so little, having divined the weak point of his argument with its frank admission of the essential difference between the two nationalities. Then she thought of her sister, and her face grew sad once more.

"I fear Mary is very ill, from what Doreen says," she remarked, handing the letter across the table to her husband. "If you don't mind, dear, I think I must go to them to-day, and see what can be done to help them."

"It is a very damp day for you to risk a journey," said Uncle Garth, looking up from the letter. "But still, this seems urgent. If you go to-day, I might run down from Saturday to Monday, and see what can be done to help them. Poor things! it is a sad lookout for those children."

So Aunt Garth, who was scarcely allowed out of the house in cold weather, owing to her delicate chest, set off by the morning express to Liverpool, and arrived in Grove Street that afternoon, tired and anxious, and chilled to the bone, in spite of the sable cloak wrapped closely about her. She asked for Doreen, and was ushered by a shabby maid-of-all-work up the narrow staircase. At the foot of the second flight, however, their way was blocked by a little blue-eyed dreamy-looking boy with sunny brown hair cut across his fore-

head and hanging in short, tangled curls about his neck. He was entirely absorbed in the story of "Rumpelstiltskin" which a boy some years his senior was reading aloud to him, the book lying on the top stair and the reader extended at full length, in a position which displayed to the best possible advantage his well-patched knickerbockers and his thin legs.

"Master Michael," said the servant, "get up quick, there's a good boy; here's a lady a comin' up."

Michael was on his feet in a minute.

"Oh, auntie!" he cried. "How glad mother will be to see you! We were afraid it would be too cold for you to come. Shall I carry your bag for you?"

Mrs. Garth, wondering to find the little fellow who used to visit them, on his way to Portland, grown into this well-mannered boy, followed him as he led the way into a bedroom close by. The light was growing dim, and the comfortless look of the lodgings struck her painfully. A pale, slim girl, with her head well set upon her shoulders, and a dignity that seemed beyond her years, came quickly forward with eager greetings, carrying in her arms a fretful baby, while on the bed, she caught sight of another child sitting beside the motionless figure that lay there unheeding all that passed in the room.

"How sweet of you to come at once," said Doreen, with a warmth of welcome which made Mrs. Garth's sad eyes shine. "Mother is not exactly asleep, I think, but all day she has lain like that, only rousing up when we actually speak to her."

Mrs. Garth moved quietly across to the bedside, and

stood for some moments, looking at the fragile face which yet was less changed than she had feared.

"I will take off my bonnet," she said, "and then come back to stay with her. Don't disturb her just yet."

"Michael will take care of them here for a minute, and I will show you your room," said Doreen. "Oh, Mrs. Muchmore!" she exclaimed, as they passed out on to the staircase. "Have you come back to us again?"

"Should have been round before," said Hagar, who seldom employed a pronoun if she could help it, "but there was no leavin' my son and his wife. Guess the marriage will turn out well, after all, though it did seem a flyin' in the face of Providence which ordained that man should be created before his wife. How's Mis' O'Ryan?"

"She has been drowsy all day," said Doreen. "This is my aunt, Mrs. Garth, who has just arrived. I wish you would order tea to be brought up quickly; perhaps mother would take a little."

"Will see to it," said Hagar, bustling off, while Doreen, still carrying the baby, took Mrs. Garth to her room, talking as they went of Hagar's goodness to them on board.

"They were all kind to us," she said, "but Mrs. Muchmore was our good angel." Then, laughing a little at the idea, "She is not much like the conventional angel with yellow ringlets and a doll's face, is she? But that brisk, cheery way of hers kept us all going through that dreadful time."

She broke off abruptly. Some day, perhaps, she

might speak freely of all that had passed at the time of her father's death, but now her lips were locked, not only by the sense that all her powers were needed to cope with the present trouble, but by that curious barrier which generally, to some extent, exists between those of different generations.

When they returned they found that Hagar Muchmore had lighted the candles and drawn down the blinds, contriving by a few rapid and dexterous touches to give a somewhat more comfortable air to the whole place. Then she carried off all the children to tea in the lower regions, promising that some should be sent up in a few minutes to the sick-room.

"Mother," said Doreen, bending down to kiss the invalid, "there is good news for you. Auntie has come; see, she is waiting to speak to you."

For the first time since her husband's death a gleam of pleasure lit up Mrs. O'Ryan's face; for a little while she was quite roused, and lay with her hand clasped in her sister's, listening eagerly to all that she had to tell, and to Doreen's great delight seeming even to enjoy the tea when it came. The poor girl had no experience to warn her that this was but the last faint flicker of the flame, and that death was close at hand. Once more her buoyant nature began to hope, and to weave countless plans for the future. She laughed and chatted with the children as she put them to bed, and consented without hesitation to lie down for awhile herself, and leave the first watch of the night to Mrs. Garth. Her aunt was loath to disturb her; but about midnight so unmistakable a change set in that she dared not hesitate, and candle in hand she glided into the quiet room,

glancing first at Michael and little Dermot sound asleep in their bed in the corner, with "Rumpelstiltskin" ready for an early morning hour, then crossing the room to the other bed, where, with the baby's cradle within reach, and with little Mollie's arms clasped about her, lay Doreen. The girl looked far younger asleep than awake; the curve of her cheek against the pillow, the dimple near the mouth, the untroubled calm of the whole face, told of youth and health. She yawned with the abandon of a sleepy child when her aunt roused her.

"What, time to get up already!" she exclaimed drowsily; then, suddenly noticing the strange voice, she started up with dilated eyes. "How is mother?" she cried.

"She is asking for you,—for you and Michael," said Mrs. Garth. "But she does not want the others to be disturbed."

With a sudden, terrible realisation of what it all meant, Doreen, like one blind, groped her way across the room to rouse Michael,—no easy task. Then, together they stole into the dimly-lighted room, awe-stricken and trembling, though there was nothing of what they had expected,—no painful struggle, no effort to say last words, no anxiety for the children she was leaving,—nothing but a tender embrace and a murmured blessing, then a peaceful sliding away into unconsciousness.

And even in the midst of her bitter sorrow Doreen was comforted to think that this was the sort of death her mother had always hoped for, an undisturbed death, with neither doctor nor clergyman, nor professional nurse, nor many friends standing by; but with the bustle of

the working-day ended, and with the darkness revealing the presence of other worlds.

It was not until her aunt had left her, and until she had soothed Michael and settled him off to sleep again, that she altogether gave way. But as she once more lay down between the two youngest children, the sight of the little unconscious sisters to whom she had to play the part of second mother utterly overcame her. She buried her face in the pillow and wept as though her heart would break.

"I shall never, never be able to do it," she sobbed. "And they are too young to remember!"

How she lived through the days that followed, Doreen never quite knew, but probably the haunting consciousness of their poverty, and the urgent need that she should have all her wits about her, kept her from breaking down under the double shock she had undergone. People must either use their sorrows as stepping-stones, or be crushed beneath the weight of them. Doreen belonged to the climbers; a difficulty stimulated her and called out all that was best in her nature.

The very first sight of her raised Uncle Garth's spirits, when, on Saturday, he arrived, much perturbed to think of the responsibility that had been cast upon him by the death of his sister-in-law, and wholly at a loss to know how to dispose of her five children, who were so much less easy and pleasant to deal with than his beloved mummies. Uncle Garth did not like responsibility; he was ready to sacrifice anything except his peace of mind, but he guarded that jealously; the children might if they pleased look to him for food or clothing, but to spend his time about their affairs, to be expected to start

the boys in life, to take, in any sense, the position of a father towards them, was quite another matter. He felt unequal to such a task; it had been difficult enough in the case of his own two sons, and having just started them in life,—the one in Canada, the other in India,—and experienced the blissful relief of having such cares and anxieties at an end, he was not at all inclined to embark upon a whole family of Irish orphans, who, as he reflected with some irritation, need never have been orphans at all, had it not been for the headstrong folly—miscalled patriotism—of their unfortunate father.

It was a shock, certainly, to a man of his secluded habits, to be shown into a room where children seemed to abound in so strange a way; but Doreen, quickly guessing that their presence would fatigue him, sent Dermot and Mollie away under Michael's care directly the greetings were over, marshalling her little flock so quietly, and taking such pains to make the newcomer comfortable, that Uncle Garth at once realised that he had to do with a woman, not with a mere schoolgirl, as he had anticipated. Even her slight Irish accent did not annoy him, and he watched with a vague admiration the understanding way in which she handled the baby,—for a baby had always been to him a fearful and wonderful thing, “not by any to be enterprised nor taken in hand unadvisedly.” Bride, to be sure, was a plump and comfortable-looking infant, but he preferred to regard her from a distance.

“We have been talking, dear, about the future,” began Mrs. Garth quietly. “Doreen has had a very kind letter this morning from one of her father's friends, offering to make a home for them in Ireland; but as it is

necessary for her to be in London, if she is to become a public singer, we think the offer had better be refused."

"A singer?" said Uncle Garth. "Ah, yes, I remember hearing something to that effect."

"I have had a thoroughly good training in New York," said Doreen, "and have brought over a letter of introduction from my old maestro, which will, I hope, help me in getting engagements. But he advises me to have a course of lessons in oratorio singing from Rathenow, and that will, of course, be an expense. When everything is paid for here, I shall have scarcely anything in hand; and though Donal Moore will sell out the money that father had in the London and North Western, it will not realise more than four hundred pounds, mother thought. We must live upon that until I begin to earn money, and perhaps you would be willing to lend us some if my engagements do not at first come in very quickly. I am afraid all artistes have a hard struggle at first."

She sighed a little, with the impatience of one who feels a great power within himself doomed for a time at anyrate to inaction.

"I shall most willingly help you, my dear, as far as money can help," said Uncle Garth. "But I should fancy the life of a professional singer is full of difficulty, and where one succeeds hundreds are fated to fail."

But Doreen was not to be daunted by this somewhat damping speech. "I must sing," she said simply. "I have wished to be a singer ever since I was ten years old."

"My dear, many people form wishes early in life which have, nevertheless, to be abandoned," said Uncle

Garth. "Both of my boys vowed they would go to sea, but here is one of them farming in Canada, and the other in the Indian Civil Service, and happy enough in their work,—happy enough."

"Yes, perhaps," said Doreen, smiling ever so little. "But I am going to be a singer."

Her resolute voice made further argument impossible; and, fearing that she had spoken too vehemently, she added:—

"As to this offer of a home in Ireland, why, it is impossible to accept it; for Donal is a great deal too poor, and we have no real claim upon him. It is just his good-heartedness; he would give away the very clothes from his back if they would fit us! Donal Moore is a sort of primitive Christian, born by mistake in the nineteenth century, and awfully puzzled to find that orthodox people don't understand his notions of sharing."

"Donal Moore, did you say!" exclaimed Uncle Garth. "You don't mean Donal Moore the Nationalist?"

"Sure, then, but I do," said Doreen, instantly becoming a little more Irish in accent. "Donal is the kindest man alive; he lived for a whole year with us in America, and the boys just worship him. He is but lately married and settled in Dublin, and it would not be fair for us to take him at his word and quarter ourselves upon him. If you knew how full of suffering his life has been, and of all that he went through in prison, you would understand just how I feel about it."

"I quite think," said Uncle Garth hastily, "that it would be a most undesirable arrangement, and I hope, my dear, you will come to us. Now that my sons have left home, there is plenty of room, and I am sure it is

the arrangement that your poor mother would have desired."

"We spoke of it together," said Aunt Garth, in her quiet voice; "and it seemed to set her mind quite at rest. Doreen need not feel that she is thrusting a burden upon you; when her reputation is made, she will be able to repay anything that you advance for the children; in accepting this offer she will in no way sacrifice her independence."

"It was not so much of the money that I was thinking, auntie,—that, of course, I could repay, but it is the trouble to you and the change in your household, and all the coming and going and bustle that it must involve. They are good children; but of course where there are children there is bound to be noise, to say nothing of all my practising, which will, I am afraid, be tiresome for you."

"My dear," said Mrs. Garth, "has it never struck you that a house may be too quiet?"

And as she took her niece's hand in hers, Doreen guessed by the little tremor which she felt in it, that Aunt Garth was fretting sorely for the two sons who were supposed to be so happily settled abroad. Her heart went out to the patient, uncomplaining, reserved woman; it would be easy to respect Uncle Garth, to be very grateful to him for his kindness, and to put up with his hundred and one crotchets, but already she had learned to love her aunt, and to feel that she belonged to her.

"You must let me know," said Uncle Garth, "of any expenses that you are unable to meet here; there will be, of course, the mourning for yourself and the children: that alone will be a heavy tax on your purse."

"Thank-you," said Doreen. "But I do not mean to wear black or to put the children into it. I am sure my father and mother would rather we did not run into debt. And what do we want to be thinking of dress-makers and milliners at such a time as this?"

"I am afraid people may misunderstand you," said her uncle hesitatingly. "You see it is the custom."

"Yes; but a heathenish custom, to my mind," said Doreen. "If for protection it is necessary to have some badge of grief, why, a black rosette fastened to one's jacket would answer the purpose quite as well."

"One would shrink from the talk it would inevitably make," said Uncle Garth.

"Yes," said Doreen wearily. "But someone must go first in every reform."

Her mind was so evidently made up that he ventured no more remonstrances, though in his secret soul he hankered sorely after an entirely proper equipment, with the orthodox depth of crape, the black veils, the black-bordered handkerchiefs, and the black kid gloves.

"The poor child is evidently born with revolutionary tendencies," he thought to himself. "It's a sad inheritance!—a sad inheritance!"

Spite of it all, however, there was something in Doreen that he cordially liked and respected. The quiet courage with which she bore up in this time of grief and overwhelming sorrow, the buoyant hopefulness with which she faced her future, most of all, perhaps, her devotion to her little brothers and sisters, impressed the Egyptologist not a little. For her sake he made heroic efforts to hide the disgust he felt at the prospect of having to

meet Donal Moore, the Nationalist, and on the Sunday morning spent a considerable time in debating how he could best combine courtesy to the man with a certain unresponsive stiffness which should betoken loathing of his principles. It was, after all, natural enough that Patrick O’Ryan’s old friend and executor should run over from Dublin to the funeral; his kindly offer to the children must also be borne in mind, and severity must be tempered with all due hospitality. The Irishman must, however, be made to feel that though with them, he was not of them.

With these thoughts in his mind, Uncle Garth returned from his Sunday morning walk and entered the sitting-room; Doreen, with her white face looking a degree less sad than he had yet seen it, sat on a low stool warming her hands at the fire. Opposite her, in the depths of a big armchair, with Michael on one side and Dermot on the other, and with little Mollie perched on his knee, sat a fair-skinned, broad-browed man, whose kindly blue eyes and peculiarly gentle face looked too young for his grizzled hair.

“Mr. Moore has just come, uncle,” said Doreen; and Uncle Garth, with a murmured greeting, put a limp hand into the hand of the ticket-of-leave man, permitting him to shake it or not, as he pleased. Donal Moore, who never did things by halves, gave it a hearty grip, just as though they had been the warmest friends; and, in truth, he was thinking that he liked the look of Mr. Garth, and felt sure that the children were in good hands. He was not a self-conscious person, and it did not occur to him that the Englishman was at that moment thinking,

“So, this is the notorious ex-Fenian! This the ardent Home Ruler!”

In spite of his prejudices, Uncle Garth was obliged to own that there was something singularly attractive about the newcomer. Years of suffering and imprisonment had, strangely enough, only elevated Donal Moore's noble nature. Forced into gaol amongst criminals of the lowest type and treated with greater severity than the vilest murderer, this man had somehow managed to retain his faith in human nature, and he had come out into the world again full of eager plans for coping with the evils which tend to produce criminals.

“Evidently he might have been a most useful member of society,” reflected Uncle Garth regretfully, “had he not had the misfortune to be born in Ireland. Strange, that so thoughtful and sensible a man can yet be such a fool as to throw away the best years of his life on a mere visionary idea, a hare-brained scheme for recovering the land for the people.”

Donal Moore, in the mean time, had somehow managed to discover Uncle Garth's hobby, and as they sat down to luncheon he skilfully drew the Egyptologist towards the subject that he loved; being resolved to help Doreen as much as possible, and guessing well enough how sore a heart lay beneath her quiet manner. She looked as though all the sparkling, radiant, joyous nature had been crushed out of her. He wondered whether she could ever again be the same light-hearted girl whose rippling laughter and merry talk had been wont to keep the whole household gay in New York.

It was not until they were actually driving to the cemetery that he had any chance of talking to her alone,

and then, strangely enough, the least flicker of amusement passed over her face as the door was closed upon them.

"Uncle Garth will think me more unorthodox than ever," she said, "for arranging to come in the second carriage with you. But by this time you have exhausted Egypt, and who knows what unlucky topic he might have chanced upon. It is very good of you, Donal, to come to us in our trouble. It does make such a difference to have you. Have you ever been to a Protestant funeral before?"

"Only once," he replied; "and that was during my sixth year in Dartmoor Prison. Park, the well-known burglar died, and I was one of the prisoners told off to dig his grave and to carry the coffin."

"How horrible!" said Doreen with a shudder; "that wretch who had robbed and wounded so many people!"

"Well, God rest his soul," said Donal; "he was about as bad a man as could well be, but then you must remember he had been bred up in a sort of Fagin's school of crime. And as for the task of digging his grave, why, that is a piece of work most eagerly coveted by all convicts, for the vicar of Princetown has a kindly practice of giving the prisoners something to eat when their task is over; and I well remember, that bitter, cold day, what it was to get the rare treat of a good cup of tea and a decent slice of bread and meat after all those years of prison fare. There was a pretty little child who came out to look at us when the servant brought us the food, and a hideous lot we must have been in our convict garb, with our faces blue with the cold, and the damp, churchyard earth still clinging about us.

“‘Why have they dug that hole?’ asked the child.

“‘Well,’ said the servant, ‘one of the prisoners is dead, my dear.’

“‘Dead!’ said the child. ‘Why, then he’ll be going up to heaven, you know; oh, do let me stay and see him go up.’ And she looked at the sky, as if she fully expected to see it opening in preparation.”

“It makes my blood boil, when I think of you in that horrible prison,” said Doreen. Oh, Donal! just think how different things might have been, if England had but shown us justice! When one looks at those smug, comfortable people, walking along so unconcernedly, it is hard not to grow bitter. It was the prison life that killed my father, and it was the shock of his death that killed my mother.”

“Don’t think of what might have been,” said Donal Moore quietly. “Think of what may be, what assuredly will be won by the sufferings of all the thousands of Irish patriots. Do you think because people forget them that God forgets?”

“No,” said Doreen, sighing. “I believe it all, and yet this apparent waste of so much sacrifice and devotion sometimes seems unendurable. If one could see the least reason or purpose in this long delay of justice, it would be less hard to bear. I am like the little child in the Princetown churchyard, and want to see the heavens opened, and know the ‘Why’ of everything.”

Donal Moore was silent; he thought sadly of the family whose warm welcome to him in America had made so delicious a contrast with his dreary years of imprisonment; and that saddest thought of “Sweet households overthrown,” carried him back to his own child-

hood, and to the remembrance of an eviction which had ruined his parents, and brought them all to the verge of starvation.

"Doreen," he said, in his simple, kindly fashion, taking the girl's hand in his, "many's the time that I have grown bitter and wrathful, thinking over the wrongs and cruelties of the past. And then there comes to my mind the saying of a good old priest,—'twas Father Flynn, whom you'll have heard your father speak of;—and when I told him of the blind rage and the vindictive hatred that seized me when I remembered certain scenes, he said to me: 'Donal, you were made to play a better part than that of cat's-paw to the devil. It's a good knight of Christ's that you're called to be, and this memory of the injustice is to spur you on to help your suffering countrymen.'"

"I should like this grief to spur me on to help," said Doreen. "But the sight of comfortable, ignorant, callous indifference, like Uncle Garth's, just maddens me. I know I will begin to hate the English, now that my mother is no longer here to keep me gentle-hearted."

"No, no," said Donal Moore; "haters can't be helpers. We shall hinder our cause if we fight with the devil's weapons. I am no longer a believer in physical force, but in moral compulsion. And you,—why there is a great career before you! Your voice ought to do much for Ireland."

And so with kindly words of good cheer, and even more by the perception that came to her of her companion's noble character, Doreen was helped through that long drive to Sefton Park cemetery. The sting of her sorrow seemed gone; she was able to look at the

future with Donal Moore's eyes, and through all the grievous pain of the next half-hour she felt the strong support of his presence.

The ticket-of-leave man, the ardent reformer and agitator, was somehow the only man living who could have made that funeral service anything but a time of torture to her. But as she stood with Michael's hand in hers, at the foot of the open grave, she looked not down into the dreary depth at the coffin lid, but up to where Donal Moore stood at the further side, his grizzled head uncovered, his strong, gentle face outlined against the pale blue of the wintry sky; and she saw how his sufferings had helped, and for a moment she had her wish,—heaven was opened.

The fresh west wind blew upon her face; it seemed to brace her, to fill her with new life. Her spirit rose up bravely to meet the future. When the grace had been spoken, she turned promptly away, and, with her face lighted up by that wonderful spiritual beauty which now and then startles the dwellers upon this earth, she slipped her free hand into her aunt's. Together they walked slowly back to the gate, while Donal Moore and Uncle Garth followed behind.

CHAPTER VII.

“December days were brief and chill;
The winds of March were wild and drear;
And, nearing and receding still,
Spring never would, we thought, be here.
The leaves that burst, the suns that shine,
Had, not the less, their certain date:—
And thou, O human heart of mine,
Be still; refrain thyself, and wait.”

CLOUGH.

RATHENOW, the celebrated singing-master, was at first almost as depressing as Uncle Garth himself.

“The market is sadly over-crowded,” he said, when at her first lesson Doreen showed him the letter of introduction from her old maestro in America. “You had better employ an agent, but you must not be over-sanguine.”

“Which agent do you advise me to try?” said Doreen, her heart sinking a little.

“I should advise you to go to Freen, in New Bond Street, and have your name put down in his office; then, if anything turns up, he will let you know.” As he spoke, he opened the copy of the “Elijah” which Doreen had brought, and began half dreamily to play the beautiful little fragment of chorus, “Open the heavens and send us relief: help thy servant now, O God!” Then, to her dismay, he turned the leaf and, playing the few bars of Elijah’s part, bade her take the trying bit of recitative sung by the Youth—quite the last thing she would have chosen to begin with. However, Doreen had happily grown up with an innate tendency to grasp her

bull by the horns. She conquered her nervousness, and her voice rang out gloriously toward the end of the brief dialogue. A curious change came over Rathenow's dark features. "You will succeed," he said quietly, glancing up at the girl's eager face. And then for the rest of the lesson he made her work hard at "Hear ye, Israel," bestowing no single word of praise, but parting with her at the end with a smile benignant enough to send her away in the seventh heaven of happiness. Sorrow and loneliness and anxiety were for a time non-existent; as if treading on air, she hurried away to New Bond Street, Mendelssohn's perfect music still ringing in her ears, and the exultant sense of the good gift that had been bestowed on her filling her with an exquisite happiness.

The agent was civil, business-like, and brisk; he might have been a clerk in a counting-house; there was nothing artistic about him; he seemed a combination of all those virtues of punctuality, despatch, appreciation of the worth of money, and capacity for bargaining in which artistes of all kinds are generally lacking. Though managing the affairs of most of the greatest singers of the day, Mr. Freen frankly owned that he was not musical. He was ready enough to admit a pupil of Rathenow's upon his books, and to accept the verdict of the American maestro as to her powers; but he himself could only judge that she was a blue-eyed Irish girl, winsome and attractive, without being strictly pretty, and with that terrible eagerness for work which distinguished almost all the younger portion of his visitors.

The next time Doreen visited the office, however, her face was less bright; no engagement had turned up.

She went sorrowfully away, to wait as patiently as might be for that work which she so sorely needed. But the days passed into weeks, the weeks into months, and still Freen found nothing for her. When she had finished her course of twelve lessons she told Rathenow that she could at present afford no more.

"As to engagements, I begin to despair of them," she said, with a sound as of repressed tears in her voice, which made her teacher glance at her keenly.

"Oh, you must not be impatient," he said. "A year of waiting and practising will do you no harm at all. You are young and can afford to wait."

"But that is just what I cannot do," said Doreen. "How is it possible to afford a year's delay when I have myself and four children to support? We are orphans, and I, being far older than the rest, must, somehow, make enough to keep them."

"I have heard it rumoured that Madame De Berg is going next autumn to America, and if so, that will be very much in your favour. I think there would be some likelihood that Boniface might engage you for his series of concerts during her absence. I will mention your name to him. For the present, however, there is nothing for it but patience."

Unfortunately, patient perseverance in waiting was precisely the most difficult thing in the world to the girl's Keltic nature, and at this part of her life she was intensely lonely. Aunt Garth, though extremely kind, was too reserved to be quickly known, and far too quiet and self-contained to understand Doreen's more stormy temperament. Uncle Garth seemed to her overwrought and severely-taxed brain the most intolerable combina-

tion of dulness and fussiness. The silence and the lack of mirth and light-heartedness in the Bloomsbury household weighed upon her like a pall; and the extraordinary contrast between this death in life and the scrambling, merry, happy-go-lucky home in America was too great to be wholesome. There was nothing to divert her attention from her sad memories, and her great anxiety as to the future; for Uncle Garth, like many antiquarians, was also a recluse. He found his friends in the strange hieroglyphic records of the past, and hated any interruptions, so that of society there was absolutely none in the Bernard Street home.

"Instead," wrote Doreen to Donal Moore, "of the perpetual coming and going of my father's friends, and of all the mirth that even in spite of trouble was seldom absent for long, we live through dreary, silent days. Aunt Garth is a great reader, and has learnt to make books her friends, and Uncle Garth has his mummies and things, and once or twice two old fossils have dined with us, but they could talk of nothing but Egyptology; otherwise he wouldn't have asked them, for he cares for nothing more modern than Moses."

When she had written this her conscience began to prick her, and she reflected that her unmethodical ways must be extremely trying to the Egyptologist, and that a girl who sang as she ran up and downstairs and who had a fatal readiness to chatter upon the smallest provocation, who laughed when she should have merely smiled, and wholly declined to take Uncle Garth's decisions as being unquestionably right, must be a very disturbing element. Happily, they had two bonds of union: one was their mutual devotion to little Mollie,

whose sweet, sunshiny nature had made her the darling of the whole house. The other was Uncle Garth's love of ballads. He was not a musical man; elaborate music was to him a weariness of the flesh; but Doreen's beautiful rendering of her own native songs and of many of the old English ballads delighted him, and more than once had lured him from his study to the drawing-room, to Aunt Garth's surprise and satisfaction.

Then again, when all four of the children fell ill with the measles, Uncle Garth showed in his best colours. He never once grumbled at having his house turned into a hospital, but went to and from the Museum every morning, and worked in his study all the evening, just as if nothing unusual had been going on. Many men would have murmured, but the Egyptologist never made a single complaint, and looked distinctly pleased when the invalids began to come downstairs. Perhaps, in his quiet fashion, he had missed them a little.

One bleak day when, what with the trying spring weather, the fatigue she had undergone during the children's illness, the grief of her bereavement, and the wearing disappointment of each day of expectation, Doreen was feeling more than usually depressed, it chanced that she had to take a note to her uncle at the Museum. The sight of Mr. Garth's absorbed, happy face awakened in her a sort of envy. She paced miserably through the long galleries, conscious of being a mere unit in the great realm of Art, yet hungering with an indescribable hunger to "make good" her "standing-place, and move the world."

Crossing the great entrance hall, she pushed open the swing door impatiently, and made her way past the

drinking-fountain and the great dingy columns, pausing for a moment at the top of the steps to watch the pigeons as they swooped gracefully down into the gravelled inclosure. Just then a young man strode quickly up the broad flight. Something in the girl's attitude and in the outline of her slim figure arrested his attention; he glanced at the pale, wistful face,—surely he had somewhere before seen those pathetic blue eyes, and the white skin, which contrasted so curiously with the dark hair and humorous-looking dark brows?

Meanwhile, the pigeons flew off, and Doreen, glancing at the passer-by, encountered his eyes, and instantly recognised Max Hereford. Her whole face lighted up,—had she not been longing to meet this sharer of her secret ever since they quitted America?

“You will hardly remember me, Mr. Hereford,” she said, greeting him warmly; “I am Doreen O’Ryan.”

“I was certain I knew your face,” he said, taking her hand in his. “It was your height which puzzled me.”

“Yes, yes, I knew quite well you thought I was still a child,” said Doreen, her eyes dancing with fun. “Did I not have your fat robins and your Father Christmas cards every year? Confess now that you thought I was still a little girl with a bush of hair and short skirts?”

“I plead guilty,” said Max, laughing, “to invariably picturing you in a little red cloak. But tell me, are you living in London? Has your career begun? and when am I to have the pleasure of hearing you sing at St. James’ Hall?”

“Oh,” said Doreen, “I begin to despair of ever get-

ting a hearing. I was going to New Bond Street now to see if my agent has heard of anything, but always there is disappointment."

"Will you let me walk with you there?" said Max, quickly falling back into the frank and friendly tone of intimacy which they had gained in Ireland.

"It will seem very natural," replied Doreen, "to be walking once more with you, though Oxford Street is but a poor exchange for our mountains and valleys. But were you not just going to the Museum?"

"I can go later on," said Max. "I had only to verify one or two quotations in the Reading-Room."

"Then your career has begun?"

"Yes, after a fashion. I am chosen as the Liberal Candidate for Firdale at the next election, and in the mean time am working my own particular hobby, and speaking now and then when there is a chance."

"What is your hobby? What do you speak about?"

"Temperance," he replied.

"I wish it were Ireland," said Doreen.

"Well, that is to come," he said, smiling. "At least, I hope so. You have my promise. And, as to temperance, why, you ought to be enthusiastic about that, for one of the pioneers of the movement was your fellow-countryman, Father Matthew,—the noblest worker the cause has ever seen. How is little Michael, by-the-bye? I suppose he is at school now?"

"Not yet," she replied. "I am too poor to send him. We have been in such great trouble. My father and mother died just after Christmas, within a few days of each other, and Michael and I and the three little ones whom you have not seen are living with my uncle and

aunt in Bernard Street. In time, no doubt, I shall be able to support and educate the children, but this dreadful struggle for fame must come first, and it is so hard to be patient."

Max, for whom such an easy lot had been provided, felt aghast at her description of the plight in which she had been left.

"Have you no friends to help you?" he asked, looking at the girlish profile beside him, and marvelling how, with such a load of care, she endured life at all.

"Oh yes," replied Doreen brightly. "Not rich friends, but very good ones. My uncle, Mr. Garth, has a post at the British Museum, and the house in Bernard Street is his own property, so that he can at anyrate put a roof over our heads; and then there is father's friend and executor, Donal Moore,—he would take good care that we did not actually starve. And perhaps the greatest help of all is a most quaint American woman who crossed over in the same steamer with us. Her name is Hagar Muchmore. She grew so fond of us 'all, and specially of the baby, that when my mother died she offered to stay with us for a year without thinking of wages. I don't know how the children would have fared without her."

The relief of having a good talk with any contemporary was so great that the walk from the Museum to New Bond Street seemed far too short. At the door of Freen's office she paused to take leave of Max, but he was not so easily dismissed.

"Let me at anyrate hear the result," he pleaded. "If the news is good, you will want someone to share it

with; and if bad, why then, perhaps, all the more you will have some use for me."

She laughed, and entered the office with the same eager hope which had so often been doomed to bitter disappointment.

"I suppose you have not heard of anything yet?" she said wistfully, to the brisk Mr. Freen.

"I was just about to write to you," he said. "It is not much of an engagement. You must not raise your expectations; but Warren, the tenor, who is arranging the music for one of the city dinners the day after tomorrow, has just been in to inquire for someone to fill the place of Miss Latouche, who is suddenly indisposed. The fee for your services would be three guineas. I should advise you to accept it."

"Why, yes, to be sure," said Doreen, smiling. "I would sing in the street if anyone promised me three guineas."

The agent smiled.

"Oh, you will get on; you have a career before you, and spirit enough to win through the struggle."

"So everyone tells me," said Doreen, with a little sigh. "I hope it is true. What shall I have to sing?"

"The solo in 'God save the Queen,' the soprano part in the Grace,—here is a copy which Mr. Warren left for you,—and two other songs, whatever you yourself prefer. Mr. Warren will be here at twelve o'clock tomorrow to hear you sing through your part."

In the highest spirits Doreen quitted the office, and Max Hereford, by the merest glance at her face, knew that she had heard of work.

"And where are you to make your first appearance?"

he inquired, as they walked back together to Bernard Street.

"You will never guess," she said, laughing. "Not as you predicted, at St. James' Hall, before a crowded and appreciative gathering, but just to a lot of city dignitaries, after they have been feasting on turtle soup."

"No!" he said, in deep disgust. "You surely are not going to do that?"

"Why, yes, I am," she said. "Who am I to pick and choose,—I, who have four children to support! Oh, I daresay you know a great deal about temperance, but you know just nothing at all about poverty. It is a highly respectable dinner at the Grocer's Hall, and the great contralto, Madame St. Pierre, is the star of the evening. I shall be just a nobody; you seem to think I am doing them an honour in going at all!"

"So you are," he muttered, looking positively out of temper. "I hope they pay you well."

"Oh, the dignitaries have nothing to do with the music; all that is managed by Mr. Warren. I forget whether he is one of St. Paul's choir or Westminster Abbey; it's one or the other. He will give me three guineas. I am so glad it is guineas, not pounds. The three shillings will pay the agent's fee, and the sovereigns can all go to the children. Why do you look so grave? Are you unhappy to think that you'll never know the bliss of earning money which you really need?"

"I am afraid I grudge you to the aldermen," he said, his eyes resting tenderly on her bright face, just for a minute.

"For my part, I think they are a very good old institution," she said gaily. "And think how inexpressibly

funny it will be to sing the Grace when we have had just no dinner at all!"

"You can think of your guineas," said Max, laughing. "What other songs shall you sing?"

"I wish you would come home and help me to decide," said Doreen. "I should like very much to introduce you to my aunt."

Max was not slow to avail himself of the suggestion; for Doreen fascinated him, and he recognised the same curiously winsome nature that had so greatly taken his fancy years ago. Since then, he had been courted and made much of by dozens of far prettier, far richer, far better-dressed girls, but to none of them had his heart responded in the same way. Doreen, with her varying Irish nature, now sad, now gay, and invariably warm-hearted and courageous, fairly bewitched him.

Mrs. Garth seemed a little startled when her niece appeared in the drawing-room with Max in attendance; however, she quickly realised that to a girl brought up in America all seemed natural enough, and then, moreover, this handsome Mr. Hereford was an old friend and had known her as a child. She had not talked with him for ten minutes before she was fully satisfied that he was the sort of a man her sister would have approved of. Together they discussed the important question of what songs should be sung, and Aunt Garth having counselled something tolerably well known, Max turned over the songs in the portfolio, till he came to Bishop's "Tell me my Heart," and protested that it was precisely the song to suit the audience, who would be sure to like what they remembered in the days of their youth. He was intensely eager to know how Doreen's

voice had developed, and his face, as she sang the song, was a study. Was it, Mrs. Garth wondered, merely admiration of her singing, which brought the glow to his cheeks and the light to his eyes, or was it some deeper feeling? The great charm of Doreen's voice lay in its mellow sweetness; she had no very great compass, but her notes had that fresh purity which one hears now and then in the voice of a boy, while she had gained from her woman's heritage of pain and sorrow a depth of expression to which no boy chorister could possibly attain.

"That is perfect," said Max, at the close.

"I was afraid you were going to make the remark that I am weary of hearing," said Doreen, laughing. "Everyone says, 'Ah, what a great career you have before you!' and the wretched thing will not begin."

"It is to begin the day after to-morrow," said Max; "and you must certainly give them something Irish."

"The 'Minstrel Boy,' perhaps," she said. "It ought to be something familiar,—something to which they will wag their feet in time, you know, which is always a soothing sensation, and conducive to applause at the end."

Mrs. Garth left them for awhile, and Doreen eagerly availed herself of the chance of asking a question which had just occurred to her.

"There is one thing I have been longing to know all these years," she said; "have you heard anything more about the search for Lord Byfield's agent? or has it now passed out of memory?"

"I have heard nothing more of it since we left Ireland," said Max; "the affair caused great commotion just

at the time, and every effort was made to get some clue to the mystery; but it has fairly baffled them all."

"Do you remember," said Doreen, with a shudder, "how they said his wife had vowed that she would never rest until she had brought someone to the gallows for it?"

"Yes, poor creature; I heard that her grief had taken the form of a thirst for vengeance, but the secret has been faithfully kept, you see, and she is baffled."

"What became of Mr. Desmond?"

"I have lost sight of him. He recovered from his attack of brain fever, or insanity,—for undoubtedly it amounted to that,—and while I was at Oxford I saw him once or twice; then he went abroad, and for the last five years I have been unable to learn his whereabouts."

"Do you know," said Doreen musingly, "since I have grown older, I have often thought it was very wrong of him to let four people bind themselves by such an oath. You would never have done such a thing,—you would have gone straight to the nearest magistrate and told the whole truth; that it was just a quarrel, and that the provocation had been intense; and you would have gone to prison for manslaughter, and borne it all nobly. And then you would have come out again stronger than ever to help Ireland."

"I am not so sure," said Max; "your ideal is a high one. I should probably not have done anything so heroic. As for poor Desmond, we must not forget the state of mind he was in,—utterly bewildered by the shock, and incapable of judging. He meant to shield my mother and Miriam from discomfort, and he sacrificed

us. I have often been miserable enough at the thought of what had been forced upon you."

"When I feel very wretched about it all," said Doreen, "I think how it was a little like Moses killing the Egyptian and burying him in the sand. It was the wrong way of delivering his countrymen from the oppressors, and yet God let him afterwards become a true deliverer. Perhaps even our mistakes will teach us."

"You must have longed for someone to speak to about it."

"Yes; I can't tell you how terrible the craving was. The worst of all was just before my father and mother died."

"Had your father any sort of guess, do you think, as to the affair?"

"Never," she said. "Once he asked a few questions as to the condition of the tenants on Lord Byfield's estate, and actually inquired what the missing agent was like. But they say every girl with a secret becomes a good actress; I described that dreadful face, which you and I shall always be able to see, and he knew nothing from my look or tone that I did not wish him to learn. I still burn your little lamp," she concluded, looking with a smile into his face; "nothing would induce me to be without it; it has been my good friend all these years. The other night when Brian Osmond, our young Irish doctor, came to see Mollie, who sleeps in my room, he was quite taken with it, and vowed that he should get one like it when next he goes to Ireland."

"Who is Mr. Osmond?" asked Max, with an unreasonable pang of jealousy. "Is he a friend of Mrs. Garth's?"

"Yes, and of mine; that is, of course, a new friend," she added, colouring a little, as she realised how much more Max Hereford was to her. "He was very good when the children were ill, and I like him; but he is rather too grave and silent; I take great pleasure in obliging him to laugh."

"You leave me jealous, both of doctors and aldermen," said Max, rising to take leave as Mrs. Garth returned. "I must tell my mother that you are in London, and if you will allow it, we will come the day after the concert to inquire after you."

"I should so much like to show Mrs. Hereford the children," said Doreen; "and Michael has never forgotten the corn-popping over the fire at Castle Karey."

"But our kernels behaved badly, if I remember right," said Max, taking a long look into the merry blue eyes.

"Yes; it was foretold that we should agree to part," said Doreen, her face assuming a comical expression of mock gravity. "Good-bye."

"May the aldermen value their privileges," said Max. "I wish you good luck."

CHAPTER VIII.

“Young hearts are free: the selfish world it is
That turns them miserly and cold as stone,
And makes them clutch their fingers on the bliss
Which but in giving truly is their own:—
She had no dreams of barter, asked not his,
But gave hers freely as she would have thrown
A rose to him, or as that rose gives forth
Its generous fragrance, thoughtless of its worth.”

LOWELL.

WARREN the tenor seemed greatly pleased with the substitute the agent had found him, and Doreen acquitted herself well, as even the unmusical Freen could guess. Her eagerness to do everything in the best possible way was satisfactory. “It was not everyone,” he reflected, “who took so much pains for a city dinner.”

“Come a little early to-morrow night,” he said, “and we will run through the Grace and the national anthem in the artistes’ room with the other parts. I will ask Madame St. Pierre to be kind enough to come a few minutes beforehand for your sake.”

Doreen could talk of nothing else when she got home, and the children shared in her excitement; yet when the day actually came, the poor girl felt sad enough, for the craving for her mother’s presence returned with overwhelming force, reaching its height when she unfolded the white silk dress, embroidered with shamrocks, which had been the last work that her mother had done before leaving New York. More than one hot tear fell as she put it on, and it was well that Dermot and Mollie came

trotting up to beg to be her page and her maid; for nothing but their childish gaiety and their delight in the new dress could have cheered her. All too soon Hagar Muchmore came to carry them off to bed.

"It's much too early," protested Dermot, prepared to offer a stubborn resistance; "the clock only stroke six just now; I *heard* it."

"That's so," said Hagar, quietly; "but I guess you'll always have to be in bed early the nights your sister sings, for I must go and take care of her."

"Why?" asked Dermot. "I thought grown-up people took care of their own selves, and Doreen is awfully old."

This set them all laughing, and in her heart Doreen rather wondered how Mrs. Muchmore would comport herself in the artistes' room. Her presence, however, was decidedly comforting, when, having left the children safely in bed, taken a hurried farewell of Aunt Garth and Michael, over their game of draughts, and of Uncle Garth, buried in papyrus documents, she stepped forth into the cold night, and leaning back in the cab saw the gas-lit streets and the busy passengers flitting past as they rolled swiftly away to the city. Arrived at the Grocer's Hall, she was taken upstairs to the room set apart for the performers, and having taken Warren's injunction to come early in the most literal sense, she waited through what seemed an eternity before anyone else appeared, growing more and more nervous every minute. At last Warren himself came in, accompanied by the pianist, who was introduced to her; then, after an interval, a very fat, heavy bass, with an enormous black beard, stalked in with his music under his arm. Finally, with

a little bustle of arrival, which seemed to betoken her celebrity, there entered the great Madame St. Pierre, with her French maid in attendance. Warren treated her with the greatest deference, while Doreen, feeling horribly young and inexperienced, watched the great lady as she was divested of a magnificent plush cloak, bordered with the most costly fur, and contemplated with awe the regal gown of ruby velvet and the diamonds that flashed upon the ample white neck of the great contralto. Beside such assured grandeur, such queenly composure, she felt like a wretched little white ghost; she was conscious, too, of being decidedly hungry after her long waiting and her very frugal four-o'clock dinner. Her knees trembled beneath her when Warren said, "May I introduce Miss Doreen O'Ryan to you, Madame St. Pierre, a *débutante* from America, and a pupil of Rathenow's."

Madame St. Pierre gave her a stately, somewhat frigid greeting,—novices from America were not popular. She consented, however, to run through the Grace, and the national anthem; and at the close there was a distinct change in her manner. "Oh, you will get on very nicely; you need have no fear about that," she said good-naturedly. "By-the-bye, Mr. Warren, have you heard anything about Madame De Berg's projected tour in America? I hope it is not true that she intends to take with her that unlucky little violinist, a mere baby of seven, who ought to be in the nursery."

"No; her father will not permit her to appear as yet in public, and is taking her to Germany to study there till she is ten or eleven."

"That's the most sensible thing Harry Kingston ever did in his life," said Madame St. Pierre, approvingly.

"It went to my heart to think of that unfortunate child being dragged through the United States in the company of Madame De Berg."

"She is Kingston's cousin," said the tenor.

"Yes, and has a most unlucky influence over him. It will be well for the child if her kinswoman's career is over before her own begins. I should like to have invited Una to play with my own children, but I assure you it was out of the question; the child is a perfect little heathen, and lies as glibly as a hardened woman of the world. It's easy to see who has had the training of her."

Doreen listened to the conversation with some interest, feeling not a little compassion for the infant violinist who was too depraved to meet Madame St. Pierre's children; and while she was still wondering what sort of person this Madame De Berg could be, the summons came for the performers to go down to the banqueting-hall.

A brilliant scene was disclosed as they emerged from the staircase into the gallery at one end of the building; down below were the gorgeously decorated tables, with their lavish display of flowers and rich plate, their tempting fruit and dainty sweetmeats darkly outlined by the prosperous-looking diners in their sombre evening dress. At the other side of the gallery sat a few magnificently attired ladies, the wives of the city magnates and of the most distinguished guests of the evening. And now the dreaded moment had actually arrived, and above the subdued roar of conversation rose the stentorian voice of the toast-master who stood behind the chairman.

"Gentlemen, pray silence for Grace!"

It was a voice that made one feel as if the Day of Judgment had come.

Doreen tried to forget the great hall and the glaring lights; she thought of the dim nursery at home, and of the children asleep. She tried to pretend that she was singing in the drawing-room to Max Hereford once more, and her voice rang out clearly as she sang:—

“For these and all Thy mercies given,
We bless and praise Thy name, O Lord;
May we receive them with thanksgiving,
Ever trusting in Thy word.
To Thee alone be honour, glory,
Now, and from henceforth for evermore. Amen. Amen.”

The ordeal was over; and while the toast-master shouted out, “Gentlemen, be pleased to fill your glasses! bumpers, if you please,” Doreen was able to sit down, and was glad enough to do so; for the floor of the gallery seemed rocking beneath her. The thought of her solo made her shudder, and it was not till the whole assembly rose loyally shouting, “The Queen! The Queen!” that she forgot her fears. But when, as the four performers stood up, a hush instantly fell upon the great gathering, a sense of power and of keen delight in the power came to her. The pianist led off, and the first verse of the national anthem was sung as a quartette. Then Doreen’s fresh young voice rang through the building, and she first realised what it meant to rouse and stir an audience. In her rendering of the verse

“Thy choicest gifts in store,”

there was such ardour, such contagious enthusiasm, that not only the professional singers, but the whole assembly

joined in the chorus,—joined not formally or frigidly, but with purpose and intention.

“I call that pretty good for a Fenian’s daughter,” observed the fat bass to Warren, as the singers left the banqueting-hall for a time.

His voice had been insufficiently lowered, and Doreen, who was a little in advance, turned to confront him.

“I am a Home-Ruler,” she said, her colour rising a little, “not a Separatist. There is no one I reverence and admire more than the Queen. And, for the matter of that, there have been many of our Irish rebels who knew well enough how to honour personal goodness. Meagher once thrashed a man who spoke disrespectfully of Her Majesty.”

The fat bass stared; he did not in the least understand her; but Warren, the tenor, liked her spirit, and with a kindly word or two turned the talk to some other subject.

After this came an interval when she was glad to sit quietly by Hagar Muchmore in the artistes’ room. A strangely dreamy feeling crept over her; she forgot her present surroundings, and fell to thinking of Max Hereford. Why had his eyes rested so tenderly on her as he said that he grudged her to the city aldermen? Why had he professed to be jealous of Brian Osmond, the doctor? Why had he, at parting, taken her hand right into his, and held it for a minute, as if he would fain protect her? Not one of her New York admirers had been capable of reaching her heart. They had been charmed by her singing and by her amusing talk; but Max Hereford, by a mere look, a mere touch, had, in a single afternoon, outstripped them all. She turned over

the leaves of her next song by way of checking her thoughts, but to little purpose; for was not the song "Tell me my Heart"? And what was it that her heart was telling her? It was silent, quite silent, about that great career which everyone prophesied for her; it was not the very least elated by the consciousness of her power, or the knowledge that she had succeeded well. It held only one image,—that frank, open, English face, with its warm colouring, its genial expression, its light-brown hair, and well-opened hazel eyes. If anyone had given her the choice at that moment of all that she most desired, she would unhesitatingly have said,—the presence of Max Hereford.

"Time for your song, Miss Doreen," said Hagar; "and you'd best be careful of your dress on the stairs; for those waiters, they've dropped gravy and custard, and I don't know what all, upon them."

Doreen laughed; as she gathered up her train, she wondered what had come over her, that all at once she should feel so strong to face the world. Only a little while ago she had stood like a forlorn little ghost beside the great contralto, and had glanced with timid awe at those marvellous silk dresses of the city ladies, which looked as if they would stand alone, from the inherent virtue of their extra superfine quality. There was surely, too, a new power in her rendering of Bishop's song. Never before had she attained such pathos as in the first verse, or such joyous, irrepressible happiness as in the second part of the song. The audience heartily approved of her, and she went home with Hagar Muchmore, holding the three sovereigns and the three shillings in her hand, with a glad consciousness that they were

but the earnest of much more to follow. It was not until the quiet of the house in Bernard Street once more surrounded her, that she realised how lonely she was. Uncle and Aunt Garth were the kindest people in the world, but they had singularly little power of expression, and went on the principle of "Deeds, not words." Now Doreen was one of those who disputed the truth of this saying, stoutly maintaining that deeds without words were as dull as bread without butter. She sorely missed the genial flow of talk which her father had accustomed her to; she longed with an intolerable longing for her mother's sweet face and ready sympathy. Half the pleasure of success would have been in the joy it would have given to her parents; and somehow it was impossible to give a graphic description of the evening at the supper-table, where Uncle Garth sat with his newspaper before him, or to respond very much to Aunt Garth's low-toned questions. The profound gravity of the atmosphere seemed to strangle all natural mirth; moreover, there was something trying in the very small appetites of the host and hostess, to this hungry girl of eighteen, who, after her very early dinner and the hard evening's work, could have eaten a far more substantial meal than the one prepared. It was inevitable that in the silence her thoughts should wander back again to Max Hereford,—Max, who had somehow helped her that night to sing as she had never sung before, and whose life, for weal or for woe, was irrevocably bound up with her own.

It seemed the most natural thing in the world that he and his mother should call the next day; the house grew brighter at once, to her fancy, and with an almost

motherly pride she enjoyed showing the children to Mrs. Hereford, whose heart was touched by the little pale faces which showed evident signs of recent illness.

"They want country air, my dear," she said. "You had better send them down to Monkton Verney; we would take every care of them; have you a nurse you could trust to take them there?"

"Yes; Mrs. Muchmore is the most trustworthy being in the world," said Doreen. "But there are so many of them, it would be giving so much trouble in your house."

"The place is just standing empty," said Mrs. Hereford, "and a month in the country would do them all the greatest good. As to trouble, you need not be afraid in the least; the servants will be thankful to have them, for they find the months of our absence dull enough. Come, let us arrange to send them down next week. It is such an easy journey; and then in Easter week, when we intend to spend a few days there ourselves, you will, I hope, come with us: the country will be looking very pretty by that time. To my mind, there are great advantages in a late Easter, and you will be able to see how your little folks are getting on."

Doreen's heart bounded with pleasure at the suggestion; she could only gladly consent to a plan so entirely in accordance with her own feelings, and as Mrs. Hereford turned to talk to Mrs. Garth, she looked up half shyly at Max.

"Do you remember," she said, "how long ago in Ireland you told me all about your home, and about the old priory, and the fir-hills, and the heather?"

"Ah, we shall just be too early for the heather," said

Max. "You must come again later on for that. There are dozens of places I want to take you to. We must climb Rooksbury together, and you shall wish for a prosperous career at the wishing-tree, and we will row on Trencham Lake, and fancy that we are once more at Castle Karey, and—happy thought—we will have the grand opening of the new Firdale Coffee Tavern while you are there."

"After last night, I feel more than half inclined to turn teetotaler," said Doreen. "What an atmosphere it was to sing in! And then, when I got back to the artistes' room, with my throat all on fire with the smoke, and the concentrated essence of the dinner which floated up to us in the gallery, there was all the difficulty in the world to get just a glass of water; there was any amount of champagne, but a glass of water seemed unattainable, until Hagar Muchmore, who is not easily beaten, went down herself to forage for it."

"Who will go about with you, if this Mrs. Muchmore is down at Monkton Verney with the children?"

"Well, if I am lucky enough to get any engagements, I shall have to go alone," said Doreen. "But they say it is better when you can to have someone with you. I shall not be able to take Hagar about the country with me when I begin to get provincial engagements though, for you see the expenses would mount up dreadfully. Those who are alone in the world must learn to fend for themselves."

A look of trouble swept over Max Hereford's bright face; he seemed about to speak, but at that moment little Mollie trotted up to her sister with a note which had just arrived.

"Freen the agent!" said Doreen, glancing at the handwriting. "Perhaps he has heard of more work for me. Excuse me one moment."

She read the letter, and looked up with sparkling eyes.

"It is an offer to sing in the 'Messiah' the day after to-morrow, at the Albert Hall. Just think! that charming Miss Latouche is still indisposed."

They all laughed at her candid speech.

"Well, well," she added, "I am, of course, sorry for her, and I hope it's a comfortable sort of illness. But only to think that my greatest wish should come so soon! I wonder how I shall manage 'Rejoice Greatly' in that huge place; it almost frightens me to think of it."

"We must come and hear you," said Mrs. Hereford. "By-the-bye, had you not better drive there with us? What time should you wish to be there?"

"Oh, not more than five minutes before the beginning," said Doreen. "Never again will I be unpunctual at the wrong end, and have a whole hour to wait as I had last night; it takes all the courage out of one and sets one's nerves on edge. It is so very kind of you to offer to take me."

"It will be a great pleasure," said Mrs. Hereford, kissing the sweet, sunshiny face, which seemed to her still to retain much of its childlike character. "I have often wondered whether I should ever again hear the voice that Max discovered in Ireland; and to hear you in the 'Messiah' will be a special treat."

"I shall not feel so alone if you are in the audience," said Doreen; "I shall sing to you, and forget the rest of the people."

CHAPTER IX.

“A smile that turns the sunny side o’ the heart
On all the world, as if herself did win
By what she lavished on an open mart!
Let no man call the liberal sweetness sin,—
For friends may whisper as they stand apart,
‘Methinks there’s still some warmer place within.’”

E. BARRETT BROWNING.

“WAS I right?” said Max to his mother, as they drove that afternoon from Bernard Street. “Is she what I described to you?”

“Yes,” said Mrs. Hereford. “I don’t think you said a word too much in her praise. If success does not spoil her, I think she will be a very noble woman. And I don’t think it will spoil her, for she seems too large-hearted for petty vanity.”

“I wish she need never take up this hateful profession,” said Max, with a sigh. “Think of the mixed lot of people she will be forced to associate with; some of them no better than they should be.”

“You might say just the same of Miriam, in her society life,” said his mother. “I don’t see that it is more objectionable to sing with a bad man than to dance with him: the tares and the wheat are together, and we have not the separating of them. Doreen seems to me the sort of girl who would pass unscathed through the most difficult life. ‘Mailed complete in her white innocence,’ as Whittier puts it. By innocence I don’t mean ignorance, but a nature without guile,—a nature that will neither harm nor be harmed.”

"Yet the fate of her nation seems to be upon her," said Max. "Think of the troubles that have from her very childhood persistently beset her! Do you remember the account she gave us of her father's arrest?"

"Yes, poor child; and for all her brightness you can easily see that the shock of last January has, in a sense, ended her girlhood. Though so much younger than Miriam, she has already about her an almost motherly tenderness which I doubt whether Miriam will ever gain."

"You are always a little hard on Miriam," said Max, laughing; "but we should fare very ill without her. She is quite unique, you must admit, and, like Phyllis in the song, 'never fails to please.'"

Mrs. Hereford did not reply; for in truth her niece was a sore perplexity to her, and she had for the last three years lived in terror lest Max should fall in love with her,—a possible, but highly undesirable, ending to the cousinly friendship and intimacy which had so long existed between them. She ardently longed to see Miriam satisfactorily married and settled, but the girl seemed in no haste to comply with this wish; she flirted and amused herself, and used Max as a convenient *cavalière servente*, when no one more desirable was to be had. It was, perhaps, natural that Mrs. Hereford, in her terror of what this might lead to, and her desire to rescue her son from a position which chafed her motherly pride, should turn with relief to such a woman as Doreen O'Ryan. She had immediately learnt, from her son's way of talking about the girl, that he greatly admired her, and she was too unworldly and unconventional to care in the least for wealth or social standing. Doreen

was good, loving, well bred, well educated. What did it matter that her father had been on the staff of a rebel paper, and had been imprisoned at the time of the Fenian rising? The important thing was that this sweet-voiced, sweet-natured Irish girl would be far, far more likely to make Max a good wife, than Miriam, with her restless craving for incessant amusement and incessant admiration.

She left the choice of seats for the concert to Max, and was secretly amused at his chagrin when he returned.

"Nothing to be had in the stalls till the tenth row," he said; "however, it is the right side, so perhaps after all it is not so bad. Are there any decent flowers in the conservatory that we could send Miss O'Ryan?"

"Plenty of lilies-of-the-valley, if they will do," said Mrs. Hereford. "You had better let Harding arrange them for you; she made two lovely sprays for Miriam the other night."

But this did not suit Max at all. His mother learnt from the maid that he had insisted on arranging the flowers himself, and the result seemed satisfactory; for when, on the eventful night, they called for Doreen, the white lilies in her dark hair, skilfully arranged by Mrs. Muchmore's clever fingers, looked really charming.

"The rest of them I have here," she said, throwing back her cloak, and showing the lilies nestled against her snowy neck.

"And there is the real, original, 'Colleen Bawn' cloak," said Max; "now I can imagine myself once more at Castle Karey."

"Well, not exactly the original one," said Doreen,

laughing; "that has been cut up for Mollie. You seem to forget that I have grown since we were in Ireland."

Presently a silence fell upon them. Mrs. Hereford guessed that the girl was somewhat nervous; yet there were no signs of special excitement about her face, when now and then it became clearly visible, as the light from a street lamp flashed across it. "It is a noble face," thought Mrs. Hereford; and, in truth, that was the first impression that Doreen usually made upon people. Later on they would describe her as charming and winsome; but the first thought was invariably of a certain indefinable air of goodness, a loftiness of soul, which invested the face with a strange power.

"This must be a great day for you," said Mrs. Hereford, guessing a little what was passing in the girl's mind.

"Do you know," said Doreen, "it feels to me like my confirmation day; and I am so glad that what may be counted as my first real appearance in public is to be in the 'Messiah.' I did sing it once just before leaving America, but only to a small unimportant audience."

"I suppose you do not come in just at first?" said Max; "doesn't the soprano always have an effective little entrance all to herself just before the pastoral symphony?"

"Yes," said Doreen, "disturbing the first violins, and making an unnecessary fuss. I don't mean to do that, but shall come in at the beginning with the others; it seems to me in better taste, especially for a novice."

With a little shudder she saw that they were fast approaching their destination,—there upon one side was

the Albert Memorial, while in advance she could see the lights in the great hall, and the throng of carriages.

"There goes Madame St. Pierre!" she exclaimed, as they paused while the brougham in advance of them set down its occupants. "That is fortunate; now I can go to the artistes' room under her wing."

For a moment her hand rested in Max Hereford's as he helped her to alight; then with hasty farewells she ran up the steps, pushed open the swing door before he could forestall her, and hurried away in pursuit of the retreating contralto. Max, feeling baffled and unaccountably miserable, returned to the carriage.

"Stalls' entrance!" he said sharply to the coachman as he closed the door.

"Well, she seems in good spirits," said Mrs. Hereford; "it is a terrible ordeal for a girl of that age."

"Yes," said Max grimly; "but her whole heart is in her work. She is, in every sense of the word, an artiste."

"True artiste, yet true woman," said Mrs. Hereford quietly; and the words came back to Max comfortingly as he sat in the vast hall, listening to that somewhat stirring process of the tuning of a great orchestra, and watching the chorus as they assembled, yet never letting his eyes roam far from that particular little opening whence he knew the solo singers would shortly emerge.

But first of all came the conductor, with evident intention of making a speech. A thrill of disapprobation ran through the assembly; for was not Clinton Cleve, the great tenor, to sing that evening, and had he not, owing to his terribly susceptible throat, a most trying habit of disappointing people at the last moment? There

was perfect silence for a minute, and the conductor, to the general relief, announced that, owing to the indisposition of Miss Latouche, the soprano solos had been undertaken, at very short notice, by Miss Doreen O’Ryan. The people clapped, not because they cared at all for this unknown *débutante*, but because they were intensely relieved that it was the soprano and not the tenor who had failed. In another minute, there was a burst of applause, as the bass appeared, leading Madame St. Pierre, followed by loud cheers as the beloved tenor, the idol of the public, emerged from the back of the platform, graciously ushering in the white-robed *débutante*, and making her smile by a low-toned injunction to remember the words spoken to Fanny Kemble, and to regard the audience as so many rows of cabbages. Fortunately for Doreen, the very size of the vast assembly was in her favour; the place seemed vague and dream-like, the huge gathering just an impersonal mass, gorgeously coloured like some brilliant and crowded flower-garden. Then, when Clinton Cleve had sung, as no other tenor could sing, “Comfort ye,” and “Every Valley,” she no longer thought of success or failure, of criticism or of the children’s daily bread, but lost everything in the perfect enjoyment of the music, and in the strong desire to tell forth her divine message in the most perfect manner possible. In the last chorus before her trying recitatives, she sang a few bars, gaining confidence as her voice blended with the others, and falling more and more into the spirit of the oratorio, as with her heart and soul she sang of “The everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.”

All nervousness had now left her; it was Max who

was nervous, as he sat there in the stalls, watching the absorbed, sweet face of the girl he loved. Had she, indeed, forgotten this great assembly of critical people? It seemed like it, for she looked as happy and peaceful as though she had been listening to the angels' music on the far-away, quiet hill-side near Bethlehem. And when the violins ceased, she stood up with a simple, straightforward, almost childlike air, her clear, reedy voice sounding softly through the great hall, as she told how "There were shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night." Max lost all fear for her, as she delivered the message of the angel; he lost that shrinking from the thought of the solitary girl standing up in the huge building, for it was no longer possible to doubt that Doreen had found her true vocation. He wondered that he had wished it to be otherwise, so great a thing did it seem to him that she should be able to keep thousands spell-bound, to raise them, if but for a time, into such divine enjoyment. It was not until the end of her most trying solo, "Rejoice Greatly,"—a song which taxed her strength very severely,—that she could receive any recognition from the audience; but then, just as she became conscious of her excessive exhaustion, there came a stimulating burst of applause. This was renewed so vigorously and persistently after "Come unto Him all ye that labour," that it became really necessary to repeat the song, and there were tears in many eyes as the exquisite air, all the better loved because so familiar to everyone, fell once more upon the listening throng in that wooingly sweet voice. In the interval, she realised that her career had begun most auspiciously, for everyone spoke to her with the greatest

kindness. Clinton Cleve laid a fatherly hand on her shoulder, genuine pleasure lighting up his rugged old face, as he looked down at her.

"You did very well,—very well indeed," he said. "I like your style, and the *timbre* of your voice is sympathetic. Would to heaven that I were at your age, with my career just beginning!"

He patted her cheek as though she had been a child, and turned away with a sigh, wandering off in search of a mirror, that he might see whether his wig was well adjusted. Doreen was next accosted by the conductor, who, at the rehearsal on the previous day, had been somewhat brusque with her, but was now full of compliments and congratulations; and then Madame St. Pierre came up to introduce her husband, the well-known harpist.

"We have a little project to suggest to you," she said. "Monsieur St. Pierre and I intended to get up a company this autumn for a provincial tour. Mr. Freen tells me you have at present no engagements for the autumn, and I am quite willing to accede to the terms he requires for you. Possibly we may have Madame Gauthier, the pianist; but there will be no other lady in the party, and you would find her rather a pleasant travelling-companion; we hope to induce Ferrier, the celebrated bass, to be one of the party."

Doreen could only thankfully accept a proposal which would, as she well knew, do much to give her an assured position in the musical world; and when, at length, her work for that evening was over, and she found Max Hereford waiting outside the door to help her into the brougham, her face was radiant.

"My dear, how tired you must be," was Mrs. Hereford's motherly greeting, as she made room for the girl beside her. "You have, indeed, given us a treat to-night."

"They were all so kind to me afterwards," said Doreen. "And, oh, it is a wonderful oratorio to sing in! I am so glad my first appearance was in that, for it is the Irish Oratorio, you know."

"How is that?" said Max.

"Handel was very fond of the Irish," she replied, "and the 'Messiah' was first performed in Dublin, and the proceeds were given to the distressed prisoners' fund. Many of those who were in gaol for debt were really freed by it. I kept on thinking of that to-night; it was the performance, you know, when all the great ladies agreed to leave off their hoops, that there might be more room."

"What did it feel like to have that huge audience applauding you so heartily?" said Max.

"It felt lovely," she said, with the utmost frankness; "as refreshing as ice-cream soda on a hot day in New York."

They laughed at her simile; but a passing gas-lamp revealed to her the same look on Max Hereford's face that had startled her when she spoke of Brian Osmond, the doctor, a few days before.

"You said you grudged me to the aldermen, and I believe you had the same feeling to-night," she said, smiling. "And that is very unfair, since you yourself were among the audience. Or is it that you grudge me the applause? That is even more unfair. You see the short-lived triumph, but you don't at all realise the years

of study and preparation, the scales and the exercises and the monotony of hard work, to say nothing of the anxiety."

Max wondered how she had discovered from his manner that vague discomfort which he could not at all justify.

"Everyone must have realised to-night that you had found your vocation," he said, "and to-morrow I shall seize the opportunity of laying trophies at your feet in the shape of the daily papers."

"Ah! the critics! I had forgot that they were there taking notes to-night. How I dread them! It is horrible to think how much depends on a few lines in a paper. And if the writer happens to be in a bad temper or to have the toothache, ten to one he will visit his discomfort on others, and put in words of carping criticism that may ruin a singer's reputation."

"Somehow, I don't think they will be hard on you," said Max. "If they are, you must follow the example of Vaughan the novelist. I met him at the club the other day, and the talk happened to turn on a most ruffianly attack made upon him lately in the 'Hour.' Now I happened to know who had written it, and said so. 'Don't tell me his name,' said Vaughan, with that quietly humorous smile of his; 'I prefer to picture him as a poor, struggling, penny-a-liner, working in a garret, soured by lack of success and desperately hungry. With the proceeds of that *critique*, he went out and had a rattling good dinner, and upon my word I am glad to have furnished him with a meal.'"

"Was the critic really poor and half-starved?" said Doreen.

"No, nothing of the sort; just a conceited young jackanapes fresh from Oxford, and much spoiled by the flattery of his home circle; a fastidious, narrow-minded prig, who, if he lives to be a hundred, will never do as much for the world as Vaughan has already done."

"And the moral of that is, 'A fig for the critics,'" said Doreen, laughing. "But all the same, I shall want to see what they say, and I don't at all want to share the fate of Kingsley's 'Feckless hairy oubit,' when 'The saumon fry they all arose and made their meals of him.'"

The talk turned upon the arrangements for sending the children to Firdale, and Doreen, tired but very happy, was set down in Bernard Street, where everyone but Hagar Muchmore had retired to bed.

"Cold and hungry, ain't you," said the kindly nurse; "come and sit you down by the fire, and eat this basin of mock turtle. 'Twill hearten you up nicely."

Doreen, dreamily happy and content, took the proffered chair, and held out her dainty white-shod feet to the fire.

"Please take the lilies out of my hair," she said. "I want to keep them. Oh, Hagar! it has been a wonderful evening; I wish it were just beginning over again instead of all being over."

"Bless your heart!" said Hagar, almost tenderly; "you're young,—yes, very young."

But it was not the applause, or the sense of triumph, or even the recollection of the music, which lingered in Doreen's memory so deliciously. It was the close pressure of Max Hereford's hand as he bade her farewell on

the doorstep, and the glance which had said so plainly, "I belong to you, and you to me."

All night long she seemed to dream of him, and it was with no surprise that soon after twelve the next morning, as she was practising in the drawing-room, she heard his name announced. He came in looking unusually blithe and contented, some half-dozen newspapers in his hand.

"Here are the trophies," he said, when she had replied to his inquiries, and had persuaded him that she was none the worse for the fatigue of the previous night. "Oh yes, you need not be afraid; you can read them without calling up that picture of the hungry scribe in the attic, for they are one and all agreed about you."

"And prophesy the great career, no doubt," said Doreen, laughing merrily as she glanced through the *critiques*. "Well, they are very kind to me,—quite wonderfully kind. Such praise makes one inclined to quote Dr. Watts, and sing, 'Not more than others I deserve.' And yet do you know last night when it was all over, and I went up to look at the children in bed, and found them sleeping so peacefully, and was so happy to know that their education and bringing up was now quite safe, I couldn't help feeling that I should be very, very sorry if Mollie or Bride had to be professional singers. I don't think I could bear to think of it for them."

"Now you understand me," said Max, triumphantly; "now you realise that grudging feeling of which you accused me."

"But to be a singer is my vocation," said Doreen, musingly; "I am as certain of that as that we are talking together at this moment. I couldn't be a painter,

or a governess, or a do-nothing sort of person, or a nun. Even before the Castle Karey days I knew quite well that I had to be a singer."

"Yet you own that you would not wish one you love to take up the work?"

"If it were their vocation, they would be obliged to take it up, but I hope it will not be their special work. I would so much rather they could just be quietly at home."

"Why?" he asked.

"Because I see now that the life of any artiste must be a double life, and that it must be very, very difficult to make both the lives what they should be. It is bad enough to face it for oneself, and a great deal worse to think of my sweet Mollie having to play so hard a part."

Max seemed about to speak, but something in his look made her hurriedly proceed, as though she were anxious to check him.

"But it is ungrateful to speak thus of the life, when all the time I know there will be much that is enjoyable about it, and that it is my clear duty to live it. And now, as to the children's journey to Firdale. I am the worst hand in the world at Bradshaw, but auntie assures me that the 2.45 is the best train, and that they won't have any change."

Max found himself remorselessly plunged into the dreary discussion of practical details, and knew that it would now be impossible to say what had been trembling on his lips but a minute ago. However, he consoled himself by the remembrance that Doreen would soon be at Firdale herself, and that it would be hard

indeed if the fir-woods, the lake, or the ivy-grown ruins of the Priory would not afford him place and opportunity to open his heart to her.

CHAPTER X.

“Her summer nature felt a need to bless,
And a like longing to be blest again.”

LOWELL.

MISS LATOUCHE remained obligingly ill for the next fortnight, and Doreen was fortunate enough to be asked to take three of her engagements in the provinces. Nothing, however, chanced to interfere with her visit to Firdale, and Mrs. Hereford arranged to call for her in the carriage and take her to the station; for she was one of those people who, although rich themselves, have enough imagination to understand how to be really helpful to those who have to think of every sixpence. Her visitors were always made to understand that no gratuities must be given to her servants, and the servants themselves, who were amply compensated in other ways by their mistress, would no more have accepted a fee than an attendant in a well-ordered theatre or a waitress in an aerated-bread-shop. In this way it was possible to make Monkton Verney the greatest boon to many who were sorely in need of change, yet had little enough to live upon.

Doreen was just sufficiently tired to enjoy most thoroughly the prospect of a rest, and, though she was far from being self-indulgent, and was quite content with the simplest style of living, she was nevertheless con-

scious of keen enjoyment as she lay back in the luxurious carriage, and still more when at the station she found everything beautifully arranged for her. It was delightful to be waited upon by Max Hereford; it was pleasant to have no anxiety about luggage, or recalcitrant porters, or grasping cabmen; it was restful, too, to be tucked up cosily in the corner seat of a first-class carriage, instead of skirmishing for oneself in a crowded third-class compartment; and, above all, it was a treat not to be alone, but to have companions who at every turn seemed to consider her comfort. She made them laugh with her merry account of her three journeys into the provinces.

“Aunt Garth did not half like my going alone,” she said, “and persuaded me at Exeter to go to a very small, quiet, old-fashioned hotel, thinking it would be nicer for me. But nothing could have been worse. It was so very quiet that there was only one other visitor. I came down rather early to dinner, and thought that at such an hour I should probably dine alone. But at the long table were two places laid, and scarcely had the soup been removed, when in stalked a solemn, black-bearded Frenchman. He spoke no word, but sat down opposite me, tucked his table napkin into his collar, felt in his waistcoat pocket and drew out a pill-box, from which he produced two huge black pills as big as the top of my thumb,—they truly were quite as big. Whether he saw me shaking with suppressed laughter I don’t know. We simultaneously grasped the water caraffe; he withdrew his hand; I poured out a tumblerful, and gulped down my mirth as well as I could; he followed my example, and with frightful agility swallowed his

pills. After that experience, I don't think I shall venture on small hotels again!"

The first sight that greeted them on the Firdale platform was Michael's eager little face, which lighted up till it positively shone as he caught sight of Doreen.

"The coachman let me drive part of the way to the station," he said gleefully. "He is the jolliest man you ever saw, and, oh, there are such heaps of things to show you! Mollie wanted to come too, but we thought she'd better not, because I shall have to be inside going back, as the what-you-call-it—the waiter—no, I mean the footman,—from London, will be on the box."

Michael's unfailing tongue chattered the whole way to Monkton Verney, and his pride in pointing out to Doreen every possible point of interest greatly amused Mrs. Hereford.

"Why, Michael, I think you must be intended for a newspaper correspondent," said Max, greatly taken with the bright-eyed boy. "Nothing seems to escape you."

"Oh, I don't want to write," said Michael. "It's Dermot that means to go in for that. I do so want to be an engineer."

"Yes, indeed, I counted it a great proof of your affection that you were looking out for me, when our train came in, and not studying the engine," said Doreen, laughing. "Engines are his latest hobby; he will read the driest books about them, and will rattle off the names of their component parts in a way that makes my brain reel."

"But you like them yourself," said Michael, wistfully.

"Why, yes, asthore, of course I do. I like anything that you like, and will never forget to tell you the

name, and the sort, and the colour of every engine I travel by."

"It will be a great help to you, if both boys have some marked inclination to guide you in their education," said Mrs. Hereford. "You had better talk to the Worthingtons, who are coming to stay with us to-morrow. Sir Henry Worthington is a great railway director, and would be able to give you plenty of advice as to Michael's future."

"You will like the Worthingtons," said Max. "They are the most delightful people; and Lady Worthington is Irish. We must keep off politics, though; for they are of the opposite party. Have you heard yet, mother, when Uncle Hereford comes?"

"He says he will ride over from the camp to-morrow afternoon. His portmanteau must be brought from the station with the Worthingtons' things. Now, Doreen, this is the beginning of Monkton Verney, and we shall soon be home. I am sure you must be longing for afternoon tea."

"And for the children," said Max, with a glance at her eager eyes.

"Yes," she said, smiling. "What a paradise it has been for them!"

The road skirted the park, of which glimpses could now and then be seen through a thick wild-wood which bordered it. On the other side lay peaceful, green meadows, a narrow, winding river, and the woods of a neighbouring estate, not yet in leaf, but with those varying hues of early spring which are almost more beautiful than the following stage. Presently they came to a place where four ways met.

A steep, sandy road led upwards among stately fir groves, and Max drew her attention to it.

"That is the way we shall take you to Rooksbury," he said.

"And there is the water-mill that I sketched for you in my letter," said Michael.

"And here we are at home," said Mrs. Hereford, as the carriage turned in at the pretty gateway near the mill.

But Doreen had hardly a glance to spare for the solid, well-built, slightly prosaic mansion; she only saw two little figures dancing about on the steps, and in another minute Dermot and Mollie had flung themselves upon her.

"And if you choke me with the four arms of you round my throat, what will become of us all then?" she said gaily, carrying off Mollie to greet Mrs. Hereford, her heart full of joy at the sight of the bonny little face so dear to her.

The country air had brought the colour back to all the pale little faces, and Mrs. Muchmore, established in a large, airy nursery, was full of pride in the well-being of her small charges.

"Hagar Muchmore is really the most wonderful woman," said Doreen, as she rejoined Mrs. Hereford in the drawing-room. "She has the art of making herself at home everywhere; she does not seem cramped in a crowded little cabin, or in dreary lodgings; and yet she does not look out of her element in that beautiful nursery of yours, where a dozen children would have room and to spare."

"Ah, my dear, I often wished I had the dozen to

fill it," said Mrs. Hereford. "It used to look gaunt and bare, somehow, when there was only Max to tenant it. As often as we could we had Miriam with us, but being both only children, they quarrelled a good deal, and it was not always a successful experiment. The servants have nothing but praise for your four little ones,—never were such children, according to my housekeeper."

"Well, I think they are all pretty good hands at amusing themselves," said Doreen. "I was a little bit afraid that Hagar Muchmore, with her brusque, independent ways and republican frankness, might not get on very well, but she seems to have made friends all round and looks as happy as a queen. Perhaps her intense veneration for the first real ruin she has ever seen was in her favour. The ruins and the ivy seem quite to have taken her breath away. You see we can't supply old priories in America, and ivy does not grow there."

When they had had tea, Max proposed that she should come out and see the Priory; and together they crossed the smooth, well-kept lawn, and, skirting the side of the little lake, passed through the shrubbery to the park beyond, where, in the soft sunset light, stood the grey old ruin, with its air of peaceful decay, its forlorn, roofless walls, its graceful arches and fragments of delicate tracery. Sheep were peacefully grazing within the dismantled choir, and birds flew homeward to their nests in the thick ivy which clustered about the pillars.

"I don't think you are so enthusiastic as Mrs. Muchmore," said Max, looking into her face, which had grown sad and wistful.

"Ruins are somehow depressing," she said. "Do

you remember the ruined Abbey near Castle Karey? I never could understand how your cousin could spend whole days in painting it. One can't help thinking of the builders and how all their hopes and efforts are at an end; failure seems written over the whole place in spite of its loveliness."

"It shelters sheep still, though not the two-legged ones it was intended for," said Max, smiling.

"Yes; but it is much too good for mere animals," said Doreen.

"What would you do with it if it were yours?" he said. "Some people think I ought to restore it; but I am not going to be such a fool as to plant a huge church in a place where there is not even a village."

"I think," she said musingly, "I should turn it into almshouses for old people, or into a convalescent home for Londoners. You could use the choir for the chapel. It would perhaps spoil your view a little from the house, but the building could be low and need not be unsightly."

"I wonder what my heir would say to it," said Max. "However, I need not trouble much about that thought, for the property will certainly never come to him."

"Why not? Is it only yours for your lifetime?"

"It is a curious thing," he said. "But this property never remains in the same family long. It may pass from father to son, but the grandson has never been known to succeed. I am told it is the case with all estates that were once church property, and there is a book containing many instances of the kind. I would not like to say that I altogether believe in the legend, and yet it certainly seems something more than a mere

coincidence." Doreen shivered a little. At heart she was superstitious, and this idea appealed to her Keltic imagination.

"How did it come into your possession?" she asked.

"The estate was in the market. My father bought it, but died only a year after the purchase. Do you see that old crone over there picking up sticks? She told me, as a child, all manner of legends about the former owners. She is rather a character; I should like you to see her."

They walked on towards a plantation, where a skinny old woman was slowly tying up her bundle of firewood, with many muttered ejaculations.

"She looks like a witch," said Doreen.

"As children, we used to call her Goody Grope, after the old woman in Miss Edgeworth's story; and the name has stuck to her ever since. But she is a worthy old body, and full of humour when you get her in the right mood. Good evening, Goody; how are you?" he exclaimed, as the old woman looked up and caught sight of them. "This lady comes from Ireland, and she wants to hear all the stories about Monkton Verney,—all that you used to tell us long ago. Don't you remember?"

"Glad to see you home again, sir," said Goody, curtsying to them both. "The lady, I take it, is of kin to the pretty little lass I saw up at the house last week."

"I am her sister," said Doreen, with her usual happy pride in claiming kinship with Mollie. "Have you been telling your delightful tales to the children, I wonder?"

There's nothing they would like half so well; they are just crazy about stories."

"Bless their little hearts!" said Goody; "there's many a tale I could tell them."

"But don't you go telling them about the ghost, Goody; I don't allow that ghost to be talked about. He's part of my property; and now that I'm of age, I'll manage him myself. You'll be scaring the children if you tell them the Priory is haunted. Many's the time as a child, that I've made myself go shivering to the window, ashamed to lie quaking in bed, and have looked out at the ruins to see if he was really there."

"And did you ever see it?" said Doreen, who, like Minna Troil, did not believe in ghosts, but was, nevertheless, afraid of them.

"Never," he said, with a mischievous glance; "but Goody has often seen him; you ask her."

"What is it like, and where did you see it?" asked Doreen, with an interest that charmed Goody.

"Thrice have I seen it, but never again will I run the risk; for afterwards it makes a body feel badly for weeks to come," said the old woman. "Drains all the strength out of you, that it does."

"Is it, then, so dreadful to look at?"

"No," said the old woman, musingly; "it's not that it is altogether horrible to see, but it's uncanny to look up all at once, as you are crossing the park on a moonlight night, and thinking of nothing in particular, to be taken right back into the past,—to see a figure kneeling there in the ruins in the old-time dress, a wide ruffle about the throat of him, and a little beard cut in a point, and a cloak cast about his shoulders. You can

see his picture in Monkton Verney Hall now, and the ghost is as like the picture as eggs is like eggs."

"Is he inside the Priory or outside?"

"Well, I reckon it is where it would have been the inside, but the outer wall being all down, you can see him plain enough as you cross the park; he kneels there prayin' and prayin' to be forgiven. Many's the night I've heard his pitiful cries,—fit to make your blood run cold."

"A banshee, is it?" said Doreen. "Does he foretell misfortune?"

"Owls," whispered Max: "I have often seen them, and heard them, too."

"Oh yes," said Goody, not heeding the murmur of the Sadducee who owned the ruin. "Doubtless, he foretells misfortune; there's always misfortune to them as owns this property."

"Now, Goody, put it mildly," said Max, laughing. "You know there are exceptions to prove every rule. You always admitted that I might be the happy exception. And if you made out such a black case against Monkton Verney, you will be frightening my guest away the very day she has come."

"I always had hopes of you, sir," said Goody, looking into his blithe, cheerful face. "If ever there was one fit to reverse the ill-fortune of the place,—why then, it's you. But it's seen many a sad tale. There was Lord Royle, who got it first in King Henry's time, and turned out the Prior and spoiled the church; that's the one that walks," she added, with a glance at Doreen. "He lived to be an old man, and saw every one of his children come to a bad end. Then there was Sir Pere-

grine Blount, in King Charles' days; his only son was killed in battle. Next, the Lepines had the place, and all went well for a time, and there was two bonny lads born to them; but the heir and his brother, they both fell in love with the same lady, and they fought a duel together, and one was killed and the other was hung for his murder. Then the Wintons bought the place, and did well for a bit till the South-Sea Bubble burst,—I don't rightly know where, but it ruined them somehow, and the place was in the market again till the Chorleys took it; and they did well and were good to the poor, and the father saw no ill in his time, nor the son in his; and men thought the doom was at an end. But when the grandson came into the estate, men saw that the delay had only made the doom all the worse; such trouble there had never been before. From being a pleasant enough boy, young Mr. Chorley grew into the wildest and wickedest man that Monkton Verney had ever known for its owner. He went to the bad, and there were shocking doings, I've heard my mother say. And one night, when there was a great party of them in the house, drinking and gambling, sudden destruction came upon them. The master was taken ill, and the next day two of the guests were stricken down. The rest fled, but before the week was out Squire Chorley was carried to the churchyard. After that the house stood empty many years, until Squire Hereford bought it. There's a doom on the place,—nobody can deny that, though nowadays folk laugh at such things. They can't get over facts; and it's my hope that the squire here will be warned in time, and give back to the Almighty what is His by right."

"For my part," said Max, smiling, "I think it's uncommonly hard that I should be made to suffer for the sins of Lord Royle, which took place in 1536. The place was bought with money which my father had honourably earned as a civil engineer, and why can't you let me enjoy it in peace, Goody?"

The old woman shook her head. "There'll never be peace in Monkton Verney," she said; "not lasting peace."

"The same might be said of most houses in the world," said Max, entirely unconvinced. "Show me the family that in three generations contrives to escape great and grievous trouble, and I will believe your legend."

"Have ye heard the doom, miss?" asked Goody, turning to Doreen for sympathy, and scanning her Keltic face with a keen but appreciative glance.

"Oh, is there really some rhyme about it?" asked Doreen, eagerly.

"Some beautiful doggerel; but it sounds impressive when Goody says it, specially in the twilight," said Max, with a mischievous twinkle of fun in his eyes.

"The rhyme was found, miss, in the old church register, written in the margin by the entry of Lord Royle's burial," said Goody; and in slow, measured accents, she repeated solemnly the following doom:—

"Gained by fraud
No good shall come;
None shall find
A lasting home.
Peace shall ne'er
Be here again,

Till the land
Is freed from stain.
This is Monkton Verney's doom.
Lord, let Thy blessed kingdom come!''

There was a minute's silence, then the old woman picked up her bundle of firewood.

"'Tis getting late, sir, and the lady will be taking cold," she said. "I wish ye both good evening."

They bade her a kindly farewell, and thanked her for the story.

"Lady Worthington will be here to-morrow, and she will be coming to see you for certain, Goody," said Max; "she loves nothing better than to hear you tell of the ghost."

They turned away and crossed the park to the shrubbery, the old crone pausing more than once to look after them.

"Yon's a bonny-looking lady," she said to herself; "and there's that in her face that might likely enough reverse the doom. It would be a fine thing if she was, indeed, to bring peace to Monkton Verney and lay the ghost. The squire, he do seem took with her, but he be young and a bit headstrong, and with a temper that ill brooks contradicting; and I reckon the lady herself is a trifle too much of the same sort of temper,—holds her head like a queen, she does."

"Isn't she a funny old soul?" said Max, as they walked briskly home; "I like to see her solemn dark eyes grow bigger as she says that wretched bit of doggerel which, to her, is more beautiful, I am sure, than any poem in the world."

"There was something quite uncannily prophetic

about her whole air as she said it," replied Doreen, smiling. "And yet, you know, there is truth in the words,—

"Gained by fraud,
No good can come."

Why, really, the whole rhyme might be applied to the way in which the Act of Union was gained. It's a sort of Home Rule song, and I couldn't help thinking, as she said it, how you English cheated and tricked us out of our parliament."

"Now, here is fresh light on the problem," said Max, laughing. "Lady Worthington and her sister are for ever telling me to restore the church, and I tell them I will wait till the congregation is ready for it. You think that by turning Home Ruler I shall set right this ancient wrong."

"No, not this one; this is your own private affair, and the other a national matter. I only compared one with the other."

"Ah, yes, it was to be almshouses, or a convalescent home. But I don't really think it's fair that I should suffer and try to make amends for somebody else's wrong-doing."

Doreen turned and looked at him for a moment with puzzled eyes.

"Why," she said, "I thought that was exactly what we had all promised to do. Isn't that following Christ?"

She had the usual Irish habit of speaking with the utmost frankness of spiritual things; in her voice there was no slightest change, no conventional tone of piety: there was to her no borderland between sacred and

secular, and the effect was strange enough to startle an Englishman. Some would have deemed the tone irreverent, but to Max, after the first shock of surprise, it seemed like the unaffected sincerity of a child; and back into his mind there flashed a remembrance of a mountain-side, and of a little figure in a red cloak, and of a sweet-toned voice, ending the graphic description of a night of terror with the words, "Afterwards God talked to me, and it was better."

"Do you recollect that morning on Kilrourk," he said, "when you began to make plans for the future and fired me with the ambition of being a public speaker? You seem to have the gift of inspiring people with ideals. Your scheme is certainly more practical than Lady Worthington's. It even begins to make me feel a little uncomfortable."

"Why uncomfortable?"

"Uncomfortable as one feels in the morning when the bell rings, and you know that before long you must get up just when you long to lie lazing."

"You are not very complimentary," said Doreen, laughing. "Never before have I been compared to anything so disagreeable as a dressing-bell." Then, as they paused to close the gate leading into the shrubbery, she glanced once more at the grey old Priory. "Do you know," she exclaimed, "when old Goody was saying that misfortune always followed the owner of Monkton Verney, I couldn't help wondering whether that had anything to do with your ill-luck in being present that day on Lough Lee, and witnessing the struggle between Mr. Desmond and—"

She broke off suddenly with an involuntary start, for

at that moment, as they turned a sharp angle in the path hedged in by closely clipped shrubs, they came suddenly upon Baptiste, the French servant.

"Mr. Stanley has called to know if he can speak to you, sir," said the man, speaking, as usual, in his native tongue; for he had proved singularly slow in acquiring English, and still protested that he could not understand it unless spoken very slowly.

"It is the manager of our coffee-tavern," said Max. "What a plague the fellow is to come just now! I suppose I must go and see him, and, perhaps, you have had as much walking as you care for."

"Do you think," said Doreen, with a feeling of vague discomfort, "that Baptiste can have heard what I was talking about? We came upon him so suddenly, when I never dreamt anyone was there."

"Oh, I don't think he could possibly make anything out of such a fragment as that, even if he heard the words. And, as a matter of fact, I don't suppose he did hear, for he is a regular duffer at learning English, and knows little more than when he first came to us. We should not have kept him, only he is such a handy fellow, and always gets on with people."

"It was careless of me to speak about it at all," said Doreen; "but I made sure we were quite alone, and it is somehow such a relief to be able to speak of it now and then."

At that moment Michael caught sight of her, and came running across the lawn, while Max, very loath to attend to business, went in to interview the manager of the coffee tavern.

Baptiste, in the mean time, had retired to his room

in the servants' wing, and, unlocking a desk, had drawn forth a shabby little note-book. Sitting down by the window to catch the fading light, he made the following entry in French:—

“To-day the 18th April, being five years and eight months from the time of Mr. Foxell's disappearance, I travelled down from London to Monkton Verney with my master, Mrs. Hereford, and a young Irish lady, Miss Doreen O’Ryan, now becoming noted as a public singer. Heard much talk about this lady's childhood, she being a daughter of one concerned in the Fenian rising some years ago. She was also staying near Castle Karey at the time of Mr. Foxell's death, and accompanied my master and Mr. Desmond on the 18th August on an expedition to Lough Lee, as before mentioned in my journal. Taking a message to my master late this afternoon, I heard him closing the shrubbery gate, and paused behind a bush in hopes of overhearing their talk; was fortunate enough to hear Miss O’Ryan use the following noteworthy words, ‘Your ill-luck in being present that day at Lough Lee, and witnessing the struggle between Mr. Desmond and—’

“Compared with Mr. Desmond's words let fall during delirium, I am in hopes that at length we have the clue.”

CHAPTER XI.

“Not perfect, nay, but full of tender wants,
No angel, but a dearer being, all dipt
In angel instincts, breathing Paradise,
Interpreter between the gods and men.”

The Princess.

DOREEN was so happy that first day at Monkton Verney, that she was almost inclined to regret the advent of other guests, and inhospitably wished General Hereford had not seen fit to ride over from the camp in time for lunch. He came, bringing with him an atmosphere that somehow was uncongenial to her, and she could scarcely help smiling when Dermot drew her confidentially apart as soon as the meal was over, and in the softest of voices, asked, “Is that Mr. Worldly Wiseman? He’s so awfully like him.”

“Why, Dermot, what a goose you are,” said Michael, reprovingly. “He always seems to be thinking that he sees people out of books! The other day, when we were in Firdale, there was a circus passing through the town, and on one of the cars there were two lions in a cage and the tamer in with them, and Dermot shouted out, ‘Look, look! there’s Daniel in the lions’ den!’”

Doreen laughed; but she thought Dermot had very accurately hit upon a likeness for General Hereford, though she could hardly have defined what it was about him that she disliked. He carried off Max to the smoking-room, so that she had plenty of time to muse over her somewhat uncomfortable first impressions, and

Mrs. Hereford presently proposed a drive, relapsing before they had ended the first mile into a gentle doze, and leaving her companion to the enjoyment of the scenery and of her own thoughts.

"I wish he had not come," she said to herself. "He seems to be for ever sitting in judgment upon everything and everybody, and he patronises Max,—how hateful it is to see anyone patronise him! To be sure, he was once his guardian, and, perhaps, it is the remains of the old manner in which he treated him as a boy,—but that he, of all men, should dare to do it! A man so inferior in every way, so shallow and selfish and conventional, one of the coldly censorious people that can never be stirred up into an honest enthusiasm over anything. I detest him, and I am sure he detests me."

At this moment Mrs. Hereford awoke, refreshed by her nap, and not in the least imagining that she had really slept. She began to tell of the Worthingtons, of their children, of Sir Henry's kindness to Max, and of the help he had always been to her.

"They are our oldest friends," she said. "Katharine and I were at school together as girls, and Sir Henry was a college friend of my husband's. What they were to me at the time of my husband's death, I can never tell you; and all through the difficulties of later years when I so greatly needed advice, there has always been Sir Henry to turn to. In many ways he was more truly my son's guardian than General Hereford, and Max, though not at all agreeing with many of his views, has the most profound veneration for him."

"Did I not hear that Lady Worthington was Irish?" said Doreen.

"Yes, but not of your persuasion," said Mrs. Hereford, smiling. "Still, I think you will like each other,—I feel certain of it; Lady Worthington takes strong likes and dislikes: but I shall be greatly surprised if you two do not quite fall in love with each other."

The surmise proved correct; for Doreen instantly felt a sense of kinship with the tall, graceful, bright-eyed Irish woman, whose rapid movements and rapid talk, and keen, quick glances, were so full of animation and vitality that she seemed younger at fifty than many women at thirty. Max watched a little anxiously, to see what her impression of Doreen would be, for he knew from experience that if she happened to take a dislike to anyone, she would take small pains to conceal it; he knew that Lady Worthington had heard from his mother of Doreen's history and parentage, and though well aware that politics would, as usual, be a tabooed subject during the Worthingtons' visit, he was a little afraid that she might start with a prejudice against Patrick O'Ryan's daughter.

But Lady Worthington, who had protested to her husband all the way from the station on the folly of Mrs. Hereford in humouring her son's admiration for the penniless daughter of a Fenian, was fairly caught and enthralled the very moment the girl was introduced to her. For about Doreen there certainly was a curious power of fascination; perhaps it lay in that frank sincerity which had so charmed Mrs. Hereford, that genuine goodness of a nature without guile; or again, it might have been in the unquenchable brightness of spirit, the mirthfulness which sorrow and care were powerless to crush. But it was a fascination which few could resist, and it

appealed to what was highest in others, not merely to their sensuous nature.

A very merry and cheerful dinner ensued, and Doreen's heart was entirely won over when, afterwards, Lady Worthington begged to see little Bride, and went up with her to the night nursery to visit the children in bed. She had three children of her own and seemed to have endless experience of all childish ailments.

"They are careful comforts, my dear," she said. "But very real comforts for all that, and I don't think I ever saw a more charming little quartette than yours."

To Doreen, who was quite as proud of her children as though she had been their mother, this in itself was enough to stamp Lady Worthington as a delightful and discerning person. She was amused to see Michael's knight-like devotion to her, and made Max laugh by telling him of the boy's comments.

"He thinks Lady Worthington must be the most beautiful lady in England. 'I thought,' he said, 'that people with titles like that would be horrid and pompous, but she is not the least bit pompous,—she's less so than other people, not more.'" Michael is never so funny as when he gets hold of a long word and pronounces it in a way of his own; in one of his letters he assured me that the Priory was very capricious from the drawing-room windows."

"I shall call him Mr. Malaprop," said Max, laughing. "But by-the-bye, that reminds me that your Convalescent Home would also be very conspicuous from the drawing-room, and not after such a pleasing fashion." He turned to Lady Worthington, and asked her what she thought of the idea.

"'Tis the most sensible notion I have yet heard," she said, "and Miss O'Ryan, as the originator, ought to lay the foundation stone."

"But what will the artists say to our spoiling the ruins? My cousin, Claude Magnay, will call me a Goth."

"He may grumble, but his sensible little wife will soon make him see reason. They have just returned to London; I travelled down with them from Rilchester yesterday."

"Is he all right again?"

"I doubt if he will ever be quite as strong as he was before the accident," said Lady Worthington, "but he is so far recovered that he can begin to work again. It has been a wonderful recovery, and they are as happy as their own two babies."

They relapsed into talk about Rilchester, and Max and Doreen wandered off to the other end of the drawing-room, where, between talking and singing, the time passed only too quickly.

The days that followed were to Doreen more like a delicious dream than a bit of real life. After those weary months of sorrow and anxiety, after all the illness and suffering she had had to witness, after the torturing sense of poverty and helplessness, this easy life in the country house was the perfection of rest. She seemed able to live only in the present; neither the griefs of the past nor the cares of the future oppressed her, while each day deepened within her a happy consciousness that she and Max Hereford somehow belonged to each other.

On the last afternoon of their visit, it had been arranged that they should go up a well-known hill close by, called Rooksbury; an expedition which the elders of

the party entirely declined, for Rooksbury was steep, and there was no winding path by which it could be easily scaled. Lady Worthington preferred to drive with Mrs. Hereford, Sir Henry and the General rode over to the camp, and the children, to their great satisfaction, found that only Max and Doreen were to accompany them. The fir woods which clothed the hill rang with the merry voices of the climbers, as they toiled up over the bare ground, slippery with fir-needles. At the summit, upon the further side, looking away from Monkton Verney over a wide stretch of heath-covered, undulating ground, there stood a crooked hawthorn, known as the wishing-tree; and here Max insisted that they must all register a secret wish, solemnly walking three times round the bush,—a proceeding which enchanted the children. This ceremony over, the two boys went to the more sheer and slippery part of the hill to enjoy the delight of incessant running up and down, and Max found a sheltered nook for Doreen, where she could watch Mollie at a little distance searching for daisies in the grass near the wishing-tree.

“How strong I ought to be for all the work that is coming,” said Doreen, “after this heavenly rest. It is odd, but do you know, being here has made me feel years younger.”

“I hate the thought of your going back to that struggling life!” he exclaimed impetuously. “Doreen, why must you go at all,—why not make this your home? You know—you must know—that I love you! Come and help me to reverse the doom on the old place. I love you, dearest,—I love you! be my wife, and help me to keep the promise to work for Ireland!”

Doreen did not speak; but neither did she resist him when he took her hand in his, and held it closely. The light in her blue eyes was reassuring; he remembered how as a child, when wakened by him on the mountain, she had looked up at him with glad recognition, almost embarrassing him with her frank, "I was dreaming of you."

There was a newly-awakened look about her eyes now; but it was a thousand times more beautiful. It seemed to him that all her soul looked out of them, recognising and claiming his. At last she spoke reflectively,—almost sadly.

"I wonder," she said, glancing towards little Mollie, "whether I ought to let you wait for me. Even if I succeed as a singer, it would be impossible for me to think of marrying for the next five or six years."

"You are thinking of the children, and of providing for them," he said; "but surely you know that they would be to me like my own brothers and sisters. We could make them very happy at Monkton Verney,—you see, already they love the place."

She put her other hand upon his with a little, tender caress.

"Max," she said, speaking his name for the first time, half shyly, "you know that I love you, and you must not misunderstand and think me proud or ungrateful, but I cannot let you marry the whole family like that,—I really cannot. It is right that I should use my one talent; I am not going to hide it in the earth and just be idle."

He sighed; but he had known beforehand that she would never consent to abandon her profession. She

would not have been the girl whom he loved and revered, had she done so.

"I will wait," he said. "My father himself was engaged seven years, and married but one. The doom will surely not be cruel for two generations."

Doreen's eyes filled with tears.

"Oh, Max," she said, "I cannot let you pledge yourself to me like that; it is not fair to you. There shall be no engagement between us; but if five years hence you are still in the same mind,—why, then, you can tell me."

Max vehemently protested against such an arrangement, but Doreen was firm.

"Indeed, it will be best so," she pleaded; "it would never do for the engagement to be publicly announced now; it might hamper you in your political life,—it might even make my career more difficult and tedious. Besides, I should feel all the time that I was perhaps doing you harm. You might meet someone in your own set who would make you a far better wife; and then, if you were really betrothed to me—! No, no; I cannot let that be! Let us wait; we can meet often as friends, and no one save your mother need know that we understand each other."

"And your aunt; she ought to know," said Max, certain that he should never get upon a comfortable footing in Bernard Street unless Mrs. Garth were taken into confidence.

"Yes; you are right," said Doreen; "and auntie will be a very safe person. She will not talk us over with her friends."

"And in four years I may speak again," said Max,

boldly cutting off a whole year from the time she had stated.

She assented, and began to speak of all the work that would make the time pass quickly. And Max, being quite certain of her love and of his own constancy, prepared to face the waiting-time with a certain brave cheerfulness which characterised him.

"We will make a compact that four years hence we will climb Rooksbury again together, and—and manage things better," he said, smiling; "but who knows that when you are a great *prima donna*, and I, perhaps, an unsuccessful candidate for Firdale, that you will not throw me over?"

"How can you say such things!" she cried; "you know well enough that I shall not change."

"Very well; I will take your word for it," he said, smiling. "The plan we made long ago as we climbed Kilrourk is in a fair way to be fulfilled; now let us seal our promise as we did that very different promise in the Castle Karey fernery."

But the kiss was to each of them as unlike that former one as the promise itself was unlike that unwelcome pledge of secrecy. In the strength of the love which it symbolised, Doreen felt that she could face her four years of waiting and working, and her face was so transfigured with joy that even Michael noticed it, and wondered.

"We have had such a jolly time on the other side!" he exclaimed. "Why didn't you come there and watch us?"

"Well," said Doreen, readily, "the sun was on this side."

"How it does seem to shine on your face," said the boy. "I never knew before, Doreen, that you were pretty."

"For which frankly fraternal speech you shall be chased down Rooksbury," said Doreen, laughing; and, having seen that Max had taken charge of Mollie, she bounded down the hill-side, her feet flying over the steep, slippery ground, as she sprang from one tall, straight trunk to another, being well aware that those who try to walk down a fir hill generally come to grief.

Max, with little Mollie on his back, paused at the top to watch her lithe figure in its swift descent. Who would have thought that this was the singer who had held thousands in rapt attention at the Albert Hall such a little while ago! and who would dream that this girl of eighteen had all the care and responsibility of a family of four brothers and sisters to whom she must be guardian and breadwinner!

CHAPTER XII.

“If then thou dost not make use of the shield of patience, thou shalt not be long without wounds.”

THOMAS À KEMPIS.

“I HAVE come to confession,” said Max that night as, according to his invariable custom, he looked in the last thing to bid his mother good-night on the way to his own room.

The maid had gone, and Mrs. Hereford in the prettiest of dressing-gowns sat beside the fire, reading. The sunshine of late April might be pleasant enough in the day-time, even on the heights of Rooksbury, but the nights were still chilly, and in her large, lonely room she liked a fire for company. The large, old-fashioned sofa stood at right angles with the hearth. Max sat down in his usual place beside her; in his well-opened eyes there was a curious mixture of gravity and subdued triumph.

“I am a rejected lover,” he said, smiling.

“Your looks belie you,” said Mrs. Hereford, glancing with motherly pride and love at the comely face, and thinking within herself that he need not greatly fear rejection.

“Nevertheless, I’m speaking the strict truth,” said Max, sighing a little. And by degrees he told her what had passed that afternoon.

“I know what you will say,” he concluded. “You will say it is the best thing that could have befallen a

fellow who has all his life been spoilt and indulged, and had exactly what he wished the moment he craved for it."

"Well, dear," she said, "I am sorry for you, but I really do think this waiting-time will do you no harm. I suppose some people would say that you ought not to have proposed to her while she was staying here, but I can't regret it; it is far better that you should understand each other."

"Far better if she would consent to a real engagement, to my way of thinking," said Max. "However, it is of no use; she will not hear of it. Seems to think it might be hard on me, or a hindrance, and was ready with all sorts of prudent considerations that I should never have thought likely to cross the mind of a girl of her age."

"She has seen many sides of life, and has been forced to think for herself. That she should dwell so much on your side of the question shows how much she loves you, and that she is no mere weak, impulsive girl, but a true woman."

"Ah, *Mütterchen!*" he said, using the tender German term of endearment which he had learnt as a child, "what a mercy it is I belong to you, and not to a mother like Aunt Rachel, who would expect me to marry money and a title."

"Of money you already have enough," she replied, smiling; "and I would much prefer your marrying Doreen O'Ryan, with her sweet nature and her lovely voice, to your marrying into the most aristocratic of families. But indeed you wrong Aunt Rachel. Though she is anxious to see Miriam well married, I don't think she covets a

title for her. Indeed, to tell the truth, I have always been a little afraid that she wished you to be her future son-in-law."

"Heaven forbid!" said Max. "Miriam and I shall always be good friends, but nothing more. There is hardly a single subject we agree upon; we should indeed make a quarrelsome couple."

There was a minute's silence. Mrs. Hereford, thankful as she was to think that Miriam would not be her daughter-in-law, could not but realise that in marrying Doreen O'Ryan there might be sundry difficulties and discomforts which Max could hardly yet realise. That the two would be very likely to disagree as to future arrangements she quite foresaw.

"Do you think," she said, "that such an artiste as Doreen would ever be willing to retire from public life at the end of four or five years?"

"Oh, it will be time enough to think of that later on," said Max, easily. "I daresay by that time she will be sick of all the drudgery, and glad enough of rest and peace."

"I don't think she accounts it drudgery."

"But in time it must become so. Think of the sheer hard work of the travelling; and then the excitement, the jealousies, and the criticisms, the wearing anxiety, the galling sense of living in the fierce light of public life! Oh, how I hate the thought of it all for her!"

"I think you scarcely realise how sacred her calling is to her," said Mrs. Hereford. "I have been very much struck with the way in which she regards it as a sort of divine mission."

"I see she has lent you her favourite American poet,"

said Max, taking up the volume which Mrs. Hereford had been reading when he entered. "I tell her it is a contradiction in terms for a public singer to be devoted to a Quaker."

"I fancy she owes a great deal to the gospel according to Whittier," said Mrs. Hereford. "You will never persuade her that Browning is the only poet in the world, and Mark Shrewsbury the only novelist. She has much more catholic tastes than you have, and will see the best points of many rather than the supreme excellence of one. To me her great charm lies in that readiness to perceive beauty in everything. There are some lovely thoughts in this 'Andrew Rykman's Prayer,' which I was reading."

Max did not care for Whittier, but the sight of Doreen's pencilled line in the margin made him read the following passage:—

"Thou, O Elder Brother! who
 In Thy flesh our trial knew;
 Thou, who hast been touched by these,
 Our most sad infirmities;
 Thou alone the gulf canst span
 In the dual heart of man,
 And between the soul and sense
 Reconcile all difference;
 Change the dream of me and mine
 For the truth of Thee and Thine,
 And, through chaos, doubt, and strife,
 Interfuse Thy calm of life;
 * * * * * * *
 Make my mortal dreams come true
 With the work I fain would do;
 Let me find in Thy employ
 Peace that dearer is than joy;

Out of self to love be led,
And to heaven acclimated,
Until all things sweet and good
Seem my natural habitude."

"It must be his straightforward simplicity that she likes," he said, putting down the book; "that and his practical way of looking at spiritual things. What shall you say, mother, if I really try to make something of this notion for putting the old Priory to use?"

"I shall say it is a capital plan," said Mrs. Hereford; "and the arranging will be a very good thing for you during your waiting-time. But you could not build it in a day; it would need a good deal of thought and care."

"Yes, and some retrenchment," said Max. "But I shall not mind that; it will make my life a little more like hers. There are several expenses which we might cut down."

"Yes," assented his mother, restraining a smile; for Max, though not exactly extravagant, had a way of letting money slip through his fingers, and the thought of his practising economy seemed somehow incongruous. But he was absolutely in earnest, and as he bade her good-night his mind was full of schemes for the future.

As he entered his room, Baptiste turned the lamp a little higher, adjusted the shade, and inquired whether his master needed anything further.

"Nothing more," replied Max. "Call me at seven to-morrow morning."

"I will get up early," he thought, "and run through those accounts before breakfast. And talking of retrenchment, I might just as well do without Baptiste. He is a

handy fellow, and I shall miss him, but after all—after all—”

The thought was never completed, for as usual his head had hardly touched the pillow before he was asleep, and the next thing he knew was that a clear and unwelcome voice was endeavouring to rouse him.

“*Monsieur! Monsieur!*” said Baptiste, with peremptory firmness. Then, as Max muttered some rejoinder, he instantly relapsed into his usual tone of humble deference.

“A fine morning, *Monsieur*, and the clock has just struck seven.”

Max gave just a sufficient indication that he was awake to induce his tormentor to leave the room. Then, with a portentous yawn let his eyelids close once more.

“After all,” he said to himself, drowsily, “one would make but a poor hand at accounts before breakfast. I will think matters over here, instead. Baptiste shall go, and—and—”

Here he relapsed again into a delicious sleep, from which he was only roused by the ringing of the eight o’clock dressing-bell.

“It is Doreen’s last day here,” he reflected drearily, and came down to breakfast feeling disgusted with himself and with life in general.

Doreen, however, was one of those people who wake with a buoyant sense of strength and a conscious delight in being alive. The morning was invariably her best working time, and this particular spring morning when, for the first time, she had awaked to the remembrance that Max loved her, was one of the red-letter days of her life. Her bright face and merry talk seemed to

bring sunshine into all hearts, and when, after breakfast, she went away to superintend the packing, she seemed to leave an extraordinary blank behind her.

"I would almost as soon hear that girl talk as sing," said Lady Worthington; "her voice in speaking has something absolutely bewitching in it."

"She must not waste her last country morning over packing," said Mrs. Hereford. "I will send Harding to do it for her, and persuade her to go out."

Going upstairs, she knocked at Doreen's door, catching, as she did so, the familiar strains of—

"'Tis the most distressful country that ever yet was seen,
And they're hanging men and women there for wearing of the
green."

Doreen, on catching sight of her, apologised for making such a noise.

"I get into the way of singing to the children up in my bedroom," she exclaimed. "One or other of them generally comes to be my page or my maid."

"I want you to let Harding finish the packing for you," said Mrs. Hereford, taking little Bride on her knee, and looking with motherly eyes at the sweet, bright face of the girl Max loved.

"Thank-you, but it is really almost done," said Doreen. "I woke very early and was too happy to go to sleep again, and the dew was so heavy that I was afraid to risk going out, though it looked just like paradise. I have grown so to love this view."

"My dear, it makes me very happy," said Mrs. Hereford, "to think that some day in the future you will make this indeed your home. Max has told me

that you understand each other, and have agreed to wait."

"I hope," said Doreen, earnestly, "that you do not think I did wrong in what I said. Indeed, it seemed to me the only right way. Had I loved him less, I might have consented to an engagement."

"I think I understand you, dear," said Mrs. Hereford. "And I believe you are right. The four years will not be idle to either of you, and you are both young."

She could not help reflecting that not one girl in a hundred would have allowed the heir of Monkton Verney to remain absolutely free and unbound, dreading lest an engagement should in any way thwart his prospects or mar his life.

"There is only one thing," said Doreen, "that troubles me a little. And that is that later on, even if I have a very great success, there will certainly be many of your friends and relatives who will think it a very strange and unfitting marriage. General Hereford, for instance, regards professional people as of quite another order; and I do not think he will at all approve of me as a niece, though, of course, as a guest in your house he has been very pleasant to me."

"There never yet was a marriage that pleased an entire family, including all the uncles and aunts," said Mrs. Hereford, laughing. "And one thing I may safely promise you, my dear; you will have a mother-in-law who loves you very dearly, and will not be always seeking to interfere."

Doreen, charmed with the words and the look which accompanied them, threw her arms about Mrs. Here-

ford's neck. A few months ago she had seemed more desolate and forlorn than anyone in the world; now, all at once, her cup was filled to the brim with unlooked-for joys.

The lovers, ostensibly for the sake of talking over the future plans for the Priory, had later in the morning a long ramble in the park, and it was in the ruined church itself that they had their real parting; but neither the leave-taking, nor the melancholy tokens of failure and decay around them, nor even the prospect of the four years' waiting, could depress Doreen. As the balmy spring air blew softly in her face, it seemed to fill her with new life; her feet passed lightly over the smooth turf flecked with daisies; she felt as free from care as the birds that flew about the old ivy-covered walls, and darted off blithely to the trees beyond as they approached. Her bright hopefulness infected Max, who did not as a rule fail to take cheerful views of life,—at anyrate, after the first two or three hours of the morning were over. He began to realise that his position with Doreen gave him many privileges, though not all that he coveted; and he derived great amusement and satisfaction from successful attempts to dodge General Hereford, who was bent on showing him sundry trees in the park which he thought had better be cut down.

Even when he returned from Firdale that evening after seeing the last of his guests, he was still in tolerably good spirits, and was awakened rudely enough from dreams of Doreen by a discovery which stirred him to greater anger than he had given way to for many a day.

Happening to go to his room to dress for dinner

somewhat earlier than usual, he noticed, to his surprise, through the open door, that the upper drawer of his secretary, which he invariably locked, was wide open; approaching quietly he looked in, then with a wrathful ejaculation strode forward and caught Baptiste's arm in an iron grip. In the valet's hand there was an open letter, beside him on the dressing-table a pile of documents which he had evidently been looking through.

"What is the meaning of this?" thundered Max. "How dare you unlock my secretary and meddle with my papers?"

"*Monsieur* knows that I do not read English," protested Baptiste. "I was but rearranging and tidying the place; it was in great disorder, as *Monsieur* well knows."

This was true; things belonging to Max were seldom methodically arranged, and had he been prudent he would have let the matter pass, and have told the man later on that he had previously decided to dismiss him. But though usually self-controlled, Max had a naturally hasty temper, and nothing irritated him so much as any sort of deception or untruth.

"You scoundrel!" he cried passionately. "You are telling a lie, and you know it. Leave the room."

"I assure you, *Monsieur*," stammered out the servant; but Max would not hear another word.

"Do you wish me to doubt my own eyes? I saw you reading the letter; you were so absorbed in it that you did not hear my steps."

Baptiste volubly assured his master that he could speak but little English, and could read it—not at all, certainly not at all. But Max knew well enough that the

fellow was lying, and hastily scrawling a few words on a sheet of paper, handed it to him with a gesture of dismissal. Baptiste, surprised and confused, utterly lost his head.

"*Monsieur*," he pleaded, "I can but obey, yet I implore you not to take away my character."

"Oh! you can read that," said Max, drily.

He had written in English a brief direction to the house-keeper. "I have dismissed Baptiste. Pay him his wages and let him go at once."

The man flushed deeply; an angry gleam came into his dark eyes.

"I have served faithfully for many years," he said. "Will you for a mere bagatelle ruin my life and take away my character?"

"No," said Max; "I will say the truth, that I have found you an excellent servant in every respect save one. If they ask me why you left, I shall certainly not represent you as the soul of truth and honour."

"Then *adieu, Monsieur*," said Baptiste, drawing himself up, and darting a malicious glance at his master. "You will live to regret this day."

Later on, in the drawing-room, Mrs. Hereford remonstrated a little with her son on what she deemed a somewhat hasty dismissal of an old and tried servant. "You might at least have given him his *congé* with less severity, particularly as you had decided before to part with him," she urged.

"There was no time to think of that; I was far too angry," said Max. "He may think himself lucky that I did not kick him downstairs as he deserved."

Mrs. Hereford sighed, and her troubled look instantly softened Max.

"Indeed, mother, I don't think I gave him more than he deserved. Don't worry about it; the fellow will have no difficulty in getting another place; he is far too clever to be long out of work."

"I was not so much thinking of Baptiste as of you," she replied. "I hoped you had at last got your temper quite in hand; but if such a thing as this can so move you, how will you endure the far worse provocations you are sure to meet with?"

Hot-tempered and intolerant of any sort of deception, Max was, nevertheless, thoroughly conscious of his own shortcomings; he took the reproof with the silent deference seldom seen except in children.

Mrs. Hereford had certainly not spoilt her only son, and her task had been no easy one; for Max for the first ten years of his life had been one of those excessively passionate children so difficult to manage,—most loving and devoted when good, and most fiendishly vindictive when put out. The last of his serious outbursts of temper with his mother had long ago taken place. Having been guilty on his tenth birthday of some specially flagrant act of disobedience, she had punished him by shutting him in alone into her little sitting-room. Furious at losing a whole hour out of his holiday, he had revenged himself by opening the cage containing a very favourite canary that his mother prized above all things because it had been her husband's last gift to her. With huge delight he saw the bird flutter round the room and soar out of the open window into that free, sunny landscape from which he deemed himself most

cruelly and unfairly detained. But his triumph did not last long; his mother's surprise and sorrow at finding the cage empty gratified him for a moment, but the utter dismay and grief in her face as she turned to him with the sudden perception that he must deliberately have tried to hurt her broke down his pride for ever. He flung himself at her feet, sobbing out the whole truth and pouring forth all his self-loathing, all his love for her. He prayed as he had never prayed before that the canary might come back. But it never did, and its empty cage gave him many a wholesome heartache.

"I will, at anyrate, say good-bye to Baptiste, and give him the option of remaining till the end of his month," he said after a few minutes' silence. "He was to blame, but I certainly lost my temper with him."

But when he went out into the hall to make inquiries, the butler told him that the valet had already left. A month after his character was applied for by a gentleman living in Dublin, and Max, true to his word, said all that could be said in the man's praise, but when asked the reason of his leaving, wrote uncompromisingly, "I found him reading my private letters, and dismissed him in sudden anger. It was, however, to the best of my belief, his first offence."

CHAPTER XIII.

“In my thought I see you stand with a path on either hand,
—Hills that look into the sun, and there a river’d meadow land;
And your lost voice with the things that it decreed across me thrills,
When you thought, and chose the hills.
‘If it prove a life of pain, greater have I judged the gain.
With a singing soul for music’s sake, I climb and meet the rain.’ ”

ALICE MEYNELL.

IN the course of the next few years the drawing-room in Bernard Street entirely lost its air of stiff propriety; it was the despair of the housemaid, whose vain attempts each morning to tidy unmanageable stacks of music, or to marshal the books in seemly ranks, or to hide, or, if possible, to confiscate the heterogeneous collection of rubbish which the children called toys, sometimes stirred even Doreen’s untidy nature into momentary sympathy.

“Poor Marianne!” she would sing in a comical parody. “What with uncle’s study, which she may only dust at rare intervals when there are no valuable remains lying about, and what with the children’s playthings straying all over the place, and, worst of all, with my Bohemian ways and manifold comings and goings, and meals at unseasonable hours, it is a wonder that she still stays here and doesn’t desert us for some comfortable situation in a tidy and Philistine suburban villa.”

But Marianne was devoted to Doreen, and waited on her gladly, even when she gave a good deal of trouble; and as for Aunt Garth, she seemed to like the drawing-

room in its new state far better than in former times, when it had been a mere reception-room, never used as a sitting-room, or in any way made the centre of the home. She liked it specially in that interval when Doreen had come up from her solitary four-o'clock dinner, and sat working away at her letters at the davenport near the fire, breaking the monotony of her unwelcome task every now and then by merry snatches of talk.

It was now four years since the day when the house in Bernard Street had opened its friendly doors to the five orphans. As Mrs. Garth sat knitting by the fireside and glanced across the hearthrug at her niece, she saw how great a change time had wrought in Doreen. Happiness and success had entirely banished all signs of care and sadness from her bright face; yet, nevertheless, she looked old for her twenty-two years, and, spite of her simplicity of manner, gave people the impression that she was a woman who knew the world and was capable of holding her own. Gay and light-hearted and talkative she would be to her dying day, but her early struggles and the necessity of going forth into public life alone at an age when most girls are shielded from all care and trouble and danger had given her a sort of dignity which greatly enhanced the charm of her frank friendliness.

Her success had been extraordinarily rapid after those first weary weeks of waiting for a chance of being heard. Everything seemed in her favour; the retirement of Miss Latouche and the American tour of Madame De Berg left excellent opportunities for a new soprano, and Doreen had speedily become the rage.

"You must have managed very cleverly," said Madame De Berg, with a withering smile on her thin lips. "I suppose you have given little suppers to all the critics; that pays very well sometimes, and has doubtless brought you some of those pleasing laudations."

"I don't know any of the critics," said Doreen, laughing, "and I'm sure they wouldn't like having supper with me, for I go home to nothing but a great joram of bread and milk, and am far too hungry to share it with anyone."

Madame De Berg made the slightest possible gesture with her shoulders; she smiled, but not sweetly.

"Then how has all your popularity come about?" she said, the lightness of her manner belied by her jealous eyes.

"I can't think," said Doreen. "It is just a delightful surprise. I have done nothing but work hard, and of course there are plenty of singers who do that."

"Well, make hay while the sun shines," said the rival soprano, assuming a friendly tone, "for I don't think you'll last, my dear; you haven't the *physique* for a singer's life."

With which Parthian shot she sailed out of the cloak-room, while naughty Doreen ran up to the cheval glass and studied her slim figure critically.

"Must one grow so very, very stout to be a lasting sort of singer?" she asked, turning, with laughter in her eyes, to Ferrier, the celebrated bass. He was a man who from the first had befriended her; she liked him better than any of her fellow-workers, and was very intimate with his wife and daughter.

"No need at all," he replied, "if only singers would

take more exercise. I have been singing for the last quarter of a century, and am still one of the 'lean kine.' As for your success, my dear, it is not of the kind that springs from critics and little suppers, or from pandering to the taste of the public and singing sentimental twaddle; you have succeeded because you are an earnest worker, and a conscientious artiste."

Doreen had known how to appreciate such praise, and the words more than repaid her for Madame De Berg's spiteful attack.

The years had passed by, on the whole, with wonderful swiftness, and they had been happy years, full of hope and hard work and healthy enjoyment of the struggle to overcome difficulties. Rathenow had found her a pupil after his own heart, determined to reach the highest standard of which her powers would admit; her earnestness made her respected by all genuine musicians; her merry light-heartedness made her a favourite in the artistes' room, and a certain indescribable purity of heart and life gave her a peculiar position of her own in the profession, which was not to be impaired even by her occasional displays of a vehement Keltic temperament. Everyone knew that although it was difficult to rouse Doreen O'Ryan by any sort of personal attack, it was very easy indeed to stir up her wrath by an attack upon Ireland or the Irish, or by venturing to speak in a disparaging way of Donal Moore and the Land League.

The busy pen was flying over the paper at lightning speed when the door opened, and Dermot ran in, cap in hand; his curls had been shorn, for he was now a schoolboy of ten years old, somewhat thin and delicate-

looking, however, and with a dreamy look in his eyes, curiously unlike Michael's wide-awake expression.

"Two minutes to post time, Doreen!" he exclaimed. She made an ejaculation of dismay.

"This London post will be the death of me! Stamp those, there's an angel, and this one for America."

"Oh, is that a poem?" cried Dermot, pouncing upon some verses which he espied.

"Don't talk, asthore, or I will be putting 'affectionately' for 'truly' to a man I have never seen. Yes, yes; you shall read the verses when you come back. Now fly, or they will be too late."

Dermot caught up the pile of letters and bounded out of the room, while Doreen, flinging down her unwiped pen, pushed back her chair somewhat wearily, and crouched down on the hearth-rug to warm her hands by the fire.

"Drawback number one to the pleasures of an artiste's life," she said, smiling, "the dreary drudgery of much letter-writing. Drawback number two, the plague of dressmakers. Drawback number three, having to take one's family life in fitful snatches. Oh, how I wish there was no need to turn out to-night!"

"Are you tired, dear?" asked Mrs. Garth, looking with some anxiety at the mobile face, upon which the flickering firelight played.

"Not tired, but lazy; or, to quote Mr. Fox, it's a touch of 'what Madame Fox and I call lassitude,'" said Doreen, smiling. "I have been singing now for some years, at an average of five nights a week, and somehow I wish they would invent a new form of concert, for there is a hideous monotony about the ordinary sort.

It is marvellous to me how people can go week after week to Mr. Boniface's concerts, for instance; again and again I see the same faces, and they never seem to weary of the eternal round of ballads."

"What are you singing to-night?"

"A song of Spohr's; a catchy little duet with Madame St. Pierre, which is very popular just now; and, of course my great consolation, a real old Irish melody."

"Ah, here comes Dermot, eager to hear the poem."

"Taking up a piece of manuscript from the table, she read some pathetic lines about an Irish eviction,—lines which made the child's eyes dim with tears.

"They are by Mr. Brian Osmond," she said, "and a friend of his out in America—a tenor named Sardoni—has just set them to music. By-and-by I will sing you the song; to my mind it is a lovely air, and it ought to be a great success. I only wish he could bring it out at once, but there is sure to be delay before he has arranged with a publisher, specially as he is across the Atlantic. I long to be singing this and stirring up the indifferent."

"What was it that Mr. Moore was saying about the evictions that had taken place last year?"

"He was saying that owing to the bad season and the great distress, the number of evictions had greatly increased. Last year there were over a thousand families evicted; this year he thinks the number will be probably doubled, and that things must go from bad to worse until real substantial justice has been shown to the nation. I wish I could do something more for my people than singing ballads and national airs!"

"Yet to be the national singer is no small thing,"

said Mrs. Garth, in her quiet voice. "I am not sure that your songs will not outweigh other people's speeches; and in any case it is not so much what we do, but the spirit animating us that is of real importance. You actively work for your country, love her, and pray for her welfare unceasingly. Did you ever hear that saying of Marcus Aurelius, 'Every man is worth as much as the things are worth about which he busies himself'?"

Doreen was silent for a moment, gazing into the depths of the fire and tracing some curious resemblance to the outline of Monkton Verney Priory.

"So you think," she said, looking up with a smile, "that the monotony of eternal ballad concerts, and the woes of dressmakers, and business letters, and even perhaps the plague of autograph-hunters, may be set down as indirect work for Ireland? It would be a very consoling belief, though the process seems roundabout. But then, to be sure, it is a roundabout world. Did you hear that Mrs. Hereford wants me to sing at Firdale when the election work begins? I only trust it may be in my least busy time of year, for I should dearly like to do a bit of direct work like that just for once. Happy thought! Why should I not persuade this Signor Sardonio to let me sing his song just during the election, even if it is not already published? We will make him secure his copyright as soon as possible."

"Has Mr. Hereford seen the song?"

"Not yet, but I am sure he will like it. Oh, he is becoming very much devoted to Ireland; we shall soon have him a good staunch Home-ruler. Here come the children, eager for a dance, I can see."

A little fairylike girl of seven came bounding across

the room and flung her arms about Doreen's neck. She had the most winsome and coaxing of faces, but there was a fragile look about her which sometimes filled the elder sister with anxiety. Mollie was her greatest treasure, but a somewhat careful comfort. Little four-year-old Bride, on the other hand, was much such a child as she herself had been, only more solidly built, and with rounder, rosier cheeks. Her black hair was cut straight across her forehead, and Max Hereford used to declare that living in the same house with Mr. Garth had given the child a sort of Egyptian look.

A merry romp followed, then Doreen played Garry Owen, and the three children transformed themselves into Oberon, Titania, and Puck, and danced the most fantastic dances conceivable, talking in the intervals in a sort of comical jargon, partly Shakespearian, partly suggested by the latest pantomime and spoken in a stately measured fashion, freely sprinkled with thees and thous, a mode which was deemed proper among fairies.

Doreen forgot all the petty vexations and anxieties of her life as she watched them, and if the children added considerably to her work, they nevertheless contrived to keep her heart young and fresh, sweetening with their sunshiny presence the difficult double life to which she had been called.

After awhile Michael returned from his work at Bermondsey, and there was much to hear of his day's doings. He was now a tall, bright-faced lad of sixteen, and had just begun his course of training as an engineer. Doreen was immensely proud of him, and his chivalrous devotion to her was pretty to see; he was the only one who could fully realise all that she had been to them,

and already he was beginning to take thought for her comfort in a fashion far beyond his years.

"They say you are to have some wonderful infant prodigy at the concert to-night," he said, as he turned over the pieces in Doreen's portfolio, to find the songs she would need.

"Yes, to be sure; I had forgotten. Little Una Kingston is to make her first appearance in England. It seems to me a very cruel thing, this craze for precocious children. She is only eleven."

"Is she a pianiste?" asked Mrs. Garth.

"No, she plays the violin: a solo of De Beriot's, I see. Poor little mite! one feels sorry for her. Madame St. Pierre says she is now entirely under the care of Madame De Berg, for her father died six months ago, and this cousin of his is sole guardian."

"Do take me to hear her," said Mollie, coaxingly.

"No, no, darling; you are far better in bed; and for the matter of that, so would the little prodigy be, too. Some other time I will take you to hear her when she is playing at a morning concert. In all probability she will become the rage. Why, here comes Mrs. Muchmore; Bride, my sweet, you must go to bed, and Mollie shall come and help me dress."

"Wait," cried Dermot, receiving from the hands of the nurse a lovely spray of pink and white azaleas and maidenhair, "here come Mr. Hereford's flowers. How clever it is of him always to remember when you are going to sing. It must cost him an awful lot to get so many flowers! Does he send them to many other singers, do you think?"

Doreen laughed, and picking up the flowers in one hand and Mollie in the other, ran upstairs.

"You had better ask him," she said, looking back with a mischievous gleam in her blue eyes.

A little later in the evening, having climbed the familiar stone staircase at St. James' Hall and passed through the narrow outer room, she was confronted in the artistes' room by a somewhat unusual sight. A little girl in the shortest of white silk frocks stood crying by the table. Nothing was to be seen of her face; it was hidden by the long-fingered, delicately shaped hands, while wavy golden hair shadowed the forehead and hung in lovely luxuriance over the bent shoulders. Beside her stood Madame De Berg, florid and flushed, evidently in the worst of tempers, and soundly rating her little ward. In the doorway Ferrier and M. St. Pierre lingered, either from curiosity, or from an innate feeling that the child would fare worse if they went away.

"Come, my dear," said Ferrier, greeting Doreen in his fatherly fashion, "you are precisely the very being I wanted. Go and rescue that unlucky child from her tormentor;" and ignoring the fact that Madame De Berg was Doreen's bitterest enemy, he sauntered across the room and putting his hand on the little violinist's shoulder, drew her gently away.

"There is a lady who wishes particularly that you should be introduced to her," he said, kindly. "She knows all about first appearances and stage fright, and she likes nothing in the world so well as children."

Madame De Berg shrugged her shoulders.

"I wish you joy of *this* child," she said, greeting Doreen a little less stiffly than usual. "But if you will

only bring her to a proper frame of mind in time for her solo, I shall be much beholden to you. I must go down; it is time for my duet."

As she left the room, Una yielded to Ferrier's exhortations, uncovered her tear-stained face, and lifted a pair of frightened grey eyes to glance at the stranger who wished for an introduction. She saw a face that took her heart by storm, not by its beauty, but by its tenderness. In an moment she felt that here was a being to whom she belonged. Doreen stooped and kissed her.

"I have heard of you often," she said. "I heard of you on the night of my own *début* when I was quite as miserable and frightened as you are."

"Were you all alone?" asked Una.

"Quite alone; that is to say, I knew no one at all. Of course Mrs. Muchmore was with me. By-the-bye, I will get her to fetch you some water. We must bathe your eyes and make you look yourself again. It will spoil people's pleasure if you go on looking sad and woebegone."

"I wouldn't mind so much," said the child piteously, "if Herr Rimmers could have been here. He is my master, and he would have played my accompaniment; but we have just heard that his wife is dreadfully ill and he can't come."

"That does seem hard on you. But you must try to play all the better, and not add to his trouble. And as to the accompaniment, why, Ciseri is the most perfect accompanist in England, and you may be quite at rest about that. Is this your violin?"

"It was my father's," said Una, speaking eagerly.

"I think he cared for it more than for anything in the world except me. I never played on it till a few months before he died, but directly my hands were large enough he let me. I used to have a three-quarter size, and played on that when I played at the Leipzig concerts."

"Guess you'd best let me fix you," said Mrs. Muchmore, when the tear-stained face had been washed, and Una found her republican frankness so surprising and yet so comfortable that she resigned herself entirely to her tender mercies, listening meantime to Doreen's cheerful flow of talk.

"And now we had better come down to what we call the family pew," said her new friend. "Mrs. Muchmore will bring the music, and you can take the fiddle, and I shall take you." She took the child's cold hand in hers, talking all the faster when she felt the nervous clasp of the fingers. "I have to struggle into this long pair of gloves," she added, with a laugh. "Do you know the saying about gloves? 'A Frenchwoman puts on her gloves in her bedroom, an Englishwoman in the entrance hall, a Scotchwoman out of doors.' And as to the Irishwoman, I think she never puts them on at all till she is forced to do so."

Una smiled, forgetting for the moment the ordeal that was before her; but she clung very tightly to Doreen's hand as they entered the funny little den leading to the platform. It was some relief to find that her guardian was still singing the duet with the tenor; she could hear that they were fast approaching the end of "*Mira la bianca luna.*" Meantime Doreen was greeting her friends and doing her best to make her little companion respond graciously to the remarks addressed to her; but Una was

a painfully shy child, and was not easily drawn out of her shell.

"Come and look at the audience and get accustomed to them," said Doreen, taking her to the foot of the steps where she could gain a good view of the platform and a partial view of the hall. "I can see a dear little girl just about as old as you over there in the balcony; she has come on purpose to hear you, I should think, and you must play to her so beautifully that she will never rest until she has learnt to play well too. And down there in the stalls I see a gloomy old man; you must play to him so entrancingly that he will quite forget his cares and troubles."

At this moment the duet ended, and Madame De Berg, with the regulation smile fading from her face, tripped down the steps and gave a keenly critical glance at Una.

"Well, I'm glad you have come to your senses," she remarked. "Pray don't treat us to any more scenes of the kind."

The child blushed and faltered; there was an ominous quiver in her voice as she said:—

"Don't watch me, please don't watch me; it makes me nervous." Madame De Berg shrugged her shoulders.

"I can assure you I am heartily tired of both you and your fiddle," she said, with a sarcastic little laugh; and without another word she marched out of the family pew and betook herself to the cloak-room, while Una, with a look of relief, turned to Doreen.

"If Cousin Flora keeps away, I don't so much mind. I will think of what you said, and please stand just there so that I can feel you near."

And now the final tuning of the fiddle was over, and Ciseri took the child's hand and led her up the steps.

"Good luck to you, dear!" whispered Doreen, watching the poor little victim and well knowing with what dire tremblings of the knees she made her first curtsy to that great unknown public. Yet she did not appear nervous; the little feet in their white satin slippers were planted firmly; the slim legs in their white silk stockings betrayed no trembling; the pretty face only showed by heightened colour and over-bright eyes the strain of this ordeal. Pleased with the unusual sight of a violinist who might have walked to all appearance straight out of one of Carpaccio's pictures, the audience gave the newcomer a warm reception, and Una, when once embarked on De Beriot's, "*Le Trémolo*" forgot all about her surroundings and played brilliantly. Her tone, of course, was as yet wanting in richness, but both execution and expression showed that the child had wonderful talent, and there was something almost uncanny in the mastery which the shy, delicate-looking little girl displayed over her instrument. Una and her violin together were undoubtedly a rare power; but without the violin she was just a shrinking, nervous child, and it was with much ado that Doreen could persuade her to face again the applauding audience and to bow her acknowledgments.

"Will you not play again?" said old Mr. Boniface kindly. "You have evidently pleased the people."

"Oh, not now, not now," pleaded poor Una. "There are still the Scotch airs in the second part."

"Then at anyrate run on once more and curtsy," said Doreen; "and just notice how you have changed

the whole look of that doleful old man; he is shouting '*brava!*' and looking positively delighted."

Una obeyed, then returning once more, was wholesomely diverted from dwelling on her triumph by finding that Doreen was to sing. Would this sweet-faced Irish heroine of hers have a voice equal to her face, she wondered; and sitting down on the steps leading to the platform, where she could see without being seen, she watched Doreen with an eager excitement, not unlike that with which Max himself had waited for her first appearance in the Albert Hall. That most perfect and satisfying of songs, Spohr's "Rose Softly Blooming," was one which suited Doreen particularly well. It had been her father's favourite air, and both for that reason and for its own sake she loved to sing it. Una listened entranced, quite forgetting that her own ordeal was not over.

"Oh, do, do sing again," she implored, as Doreen returned; and the public clearly expressing the same wish, Doreen with a smile turned over her national song-book, and asked Ciseri to play for her the lovely Irish melody usually sung to Moore's "Last Rose of Summer," but which she had always sung to Lady Dufferin's words,—

"Oh, Bay of Dublin! my heart you're troubling,
Your beauty haunts me like a fever dream;
Like frozen fountains, that the sun sets bubbling,
My heart's blood warms when I but hear your name,

And never till this life pulse ceases,
My earliest, latest thought you'll cease to be.
Oh, there's no one here knows how fair that place is,
And no one cares how dear it is to me."

As she returned from singing it, Una looked up into her face wonderingly. What was it that brought that strange light into the Irish blue eyes? She stood up and slipped her hand into Doreen's. The touch at once recalled the singer to the needs of the present.

"Are you tired, dear?" she said, glancing down at the pretty, flushed face. "It is hot in here; let us come outside."

"I see," said Ferrier, as he held open the swing doors for them, "you have been wise enough to adopt Miss O'Ryan as your guardian angel. She is the best friend you could possibly have."

Doreen laughed and protested against being exalted to the angelic host. "A wingless and faulty angel," she said, as they went upstairs; "but your friend I will be, dear, with all my heart."

Una's words did not come readily, particularly when she knew that Madame De Berg was close at hand; but she squeezed Doreen's fingers in response, thinking in her heart that Ferrier had spoken nothing but the truth; for, had not her new friend sung like an angel? Had not there been the most wonderful look on her face when she returned from her work? And had not her kindness been altogether unlike what was usually to be met with in this hard bustling world? Nevertheless, she could not but perceive that her guardian angel had a hot Keltic temper, which did not accommodate itself at all easily to Madame De Berg's sarcastic remarks. For, in truth, sarcasm had upon Doreen the same effect which the sharp, cold steel of a spur has upon a high-mettled horse. There are people who are simply pained by sarcasm, and others who are chilled and silenced by it;

others, again, seem to catch the infection, and are able to defend themselves in evil fashion by sarcastic retort. But Doreen was apt to be entirely upset, and dangerously roused by a mode of attack which seemed to her like a personal encounter with the devil. Fortunately, the public ovation she had just received, Ferrier's undue praise, and the effect of her own singing had armed her with that humility which is slow to take offence. With an effort she managed to control the hot anger which set her blood on fire, as Madame De Berg talked with her, and as she glanced at the eager eyes of the child, so evidently watching and understanding all that passed between her two companions, a strong desire to do what she could for the forlorn little prodigy gave her courage to strangle her angry resentment, and actually to ask a favour of her rival.

"I have been talking to Una of my little brothers and sisters," she said. "Will you spare her to us next Sunday? I hear it is her only free day, and I should much like to have her."

Madame De Berg shrugged her shoulders.

"Oh, have her by all means, if you please. I should be glad indeed of anything that roused her up and made her a little more like other children. Her Sundays are her own, and she can do as she likes about accepting your invitation."

"I like to come, please," said Una, her face glowing with delight. Then, as Madame De Berg was summoned for her next song, she put both hands in Doreen's with a shy but eager gesture, and with the boldness which so often curiously accompanies an exceptionally timid nature, said hurriedly:—

"I want so to tell you, before anyone comes, how much I love you—I love you more than anyone I ever saw. I wish, oh, so much, there was something I could do for you!"

Doreen had listened to many declarations of love from sufficiently tiresome admirers, always with the vexed consciousness that it was her refusal to be actually engaged to Max Hereford which laid her open to such disagreeables. But she had never before come across this strange, touching, and yet almost amusing hero-worship from a little girl. There was something in the child's intense fervour and eager, lover-like devotion which pleased her greatly; and, though she could not help smiling a little at the thought of the suddenness with which this passion had possessed her little worshipper, she knew that such love was from its very purity and freshness a thing to be highly prized. Her heart went out to Una with that motherliness which characterises the love of all true women.

"We must see a great deal of each other," she said, stooping to kiss the sweet little face with a tenderness which thrilled through the child's heart, and seemed to fill her life with new possibilities. But neither of them in the least guessed how curiously their lives were to be bound up together.

Her thought at present was entirely how she could serve the poor little violinist, whose character and *physique* seemed so ill-suited to a life of hard work, late hours, and constant excitement. Una's reception after the playing of the Scotch airs was almost overpowering. It was quite clear that she would become the rage, and Doreen learnt with deep regret that she was in the hands, not

of sensible and considerate Freen, but of an agent who would not scruple to work her to the utmost, and from whose bondage there was no possibility of escape for the next two years.

"I congratulate you on your success," said old Mr. Boniface, as the child followed Madame De Berg down the stone staircase, looking sadly pale and tired now that all was over. Her face lighted up for a moment, however, as she caught sight of Doreen, who was standing beside the old man.

"Will you take this home to your little sisters?" she said, holding out a huge box of *bonbons*, which had been presented to her at the close of her last piece; then, as Doreen protested that she ought to eat them herself, she added entreatingly, "I would rather they had them, and indeed my head aches, and it makes me feel sick even to think of chocolate creams."

After that, there was nothing for it but to accept the present, and urging Una to come as early as she liked on Sunday, Doreen bade her good-night, and turned to Mr. Boniface with a sad look in her eyes.

"There is something very wrong there," she said, in a low voice. "That poor little soul is being robbed of her childhood."

CHAPTER XIV.

“The wide, transparent radiance of the gloaming
Broods high above the city’s great unrest,
And rosy little clouds, like tired birds homing,
Flutter soft wings against the shining west.

“Down the long vistas of the crowded highways,
A purple bloom is gently gathering,
And daintily through streets, and squares, and by-ways,
Flit the sweet hesitating steps of spring.”

FRANCES WYNNE.

AMONG the audience that evening at St. James’ Hall, there chanced to have been, unknown to Doreen, her old acquaintance, Miriam Hereford. The General, too, had patiently sat through the whole concert to please his daughter; but his thoughts had been engrossed with other matters, and as they drove home his talk took a practical turn.

“My dear,” he said, “I think that notion of yours as to your cousin’s fancy for Miss O’Ryan was all a mistake. The years pass on, and nothing comes of it.”

“I don’t know what to think,” said Miriam, indifferently. “He makes no secret of his admiration for her; but then, as you say, nothing happens.”

“It is a great relief to my mind,” said the General, “for a more unfitting marriage could not well be.”

“Well, papa, I don’t know; Doreen is very charming and very clever; and if her father was an Irish rebel, I don’t see that it need affect us very much. He died years ago, and will never give any more trouble.”

"Max ought to marry in his own set," said the General, decidedly; "and you know well enough, my dear, what I have always desired for him."

"Yes, you were always a hard-hearted father," said Miriam, saucily. "Most anxious to get your daughter safely disposed of. It's very unlucky, daddy, that you and I look on that question so differently. I am in no hurry at all to leave you."

"Ah, my dear, it is of your own good that I think," said the General. "It is well enough for you now; but what is to become of you at my death? And time is passing by; you ought seriously to consider the matter. I own that I long to see you established at Monkton Verney, and Max is a thoroughly good fellow; he would make you perfectly happy."

"No, daddy," she protested, "he would make me perfectly miserable. As a cousin, I like him very much, but as a husband he would fidget me to death. I know his faults a great deal too well."

"You are hard on him," said the General. "He is no immaculate hero, but he is one of the best fellows I know, liked and respected by all who come across him."

"Yes, yes, Max is all very well," she said impatiently, "but it is so dull to marry one's cousin; and then, he has never asked me."

"You could easily make him," said the father. "You have always had great influence over him."

"Perhaps," she confessed; "but I don't want him, daddy; and what's more, I won't have him: he is quite given over to philanthropy and politics, and would expect a wife to sympathise with his tastes. Yes, yes, I

quite agree to all you would say; he is handsome and rich,—perhaps I should like him better if he were not quite so aggressively handsome and rich.”

“Well,” said the General, with a sigh, “I confess I don’t understand you, my dear; he seems to me a delightful fellow.”

“So delightful, but so uncomfortable,” said Miriam, naughtily. “People who meet him in society only know one side of him, and the sunny side is fascinating enough; but when he is put out, he can be more like a grizzly bear than anyone I know. And besides, now I think of it, I fancy Doreen O’Ryan really does care for him, and the politics and the philanthropy are so much more in her line.”

As she recalled Doreen’s bright face that evening, her thoughts wandered back to the summer visit to Ireland long ago, and to the remembrance of the little curly-headed Irish girl who had sung to them at Castle Karey. Certainly, she reflected, she would not at all like “the heart of the minstrel” to be “breaking,” for the sake, too, of a purely conventional and worldly marriage on her own part.

It was true that she had often contemplated a loveless marriage with a certain calm docility, but somehow she would have preferred not to sacrifice Max or Doreen. Still, as her father said, time was passing; she was now eight-and-twenty, and it was scarcely to be supposed that her whole life was to be devoted to the memory of John Desmond,—a man who, by some strange magic, had won her heart as a girl of eighteen, and whose plain, forcible face rose before her now more vividly than faces she had seen but a few minutes ago. She

leant back in the brougham, letting various possibilities float through her mind, weighing the advantages and the disadvantages of marriage in a curiously calm, unembarrassed fashion. Should she yield to her father's and her mother's great wish, or should she still be loyal to that dream of her girlhood? An irritating sense of the great power which Desmond had gained over her, and of the little she really knew of his life or character, took possession of her and brought a cloud of trouble over her beautiful face. Most fervently did she wish she had never paid that Irish visit which had been destined to change the whole tenor of her existence. After all, it would be very satisfactory to be at the head of the Monkton Verney household, and her father had rightly said that she had great influence with Max. She might do much to divert him from his tiresome schemes of reform, might lure him into safe and pleasant paths and make him more like other people; might tone down his disturbing and unfashionable enthusiasms, and develop in him that slightly cynical indifference which was, to her mind, "better form."

The brougham stopped as she reached this point in her reflections; her father handed her out and fumbled for his latch-key while she waited on the door-step, looking out over the moonlit garden of the Crescent. Suddenly she was constrained to look at the face of a man who paced slowly along the pavement; she started as though she had seen a ghost, recognising in an instant that pale, sallow face, almost livid-looking in the moonlight, and those dark, wild eyes which met hers now sadly and hungrily. Miriam made a step forward as

though to speak, but John Desmond merely raised his hat and passed on.

"Come, my dear," said the General, throwing open the door; "it is too wintry a night for moon-gazing."

And the girl with an effort dragged herself across the hall, and with a hasty good-night to her father, crept upstairs to her room, dismissed her maid, and dropped into a chair beside the fire, trembling in every limb. He was alive and in London. He knew where she lived, and he still loved her! All her calm dispassionate consideration of a loveless marriage with Max Hereford faded away as though it had never for a moment existed; the world held for her only that one man whose extraordinary influence she acknowledged without in the least understanding it.

In the meantime, Desmond, even more agitated by the recognising glance which he had received, paced slowly back to his rooms in a dismal back-street at Westminster. He was much altered since the Castle Karey days, though the change was not one that could be noticed by Miriam in the moonlight. Seen, however, beneath the flaring gas-burner in his scantily furnished lodging, Desmond revealed the traces of many years' anxiety and excitement; there were deep lines round his mouth, the hair had receded from his forehead, making it more noticeably high than ever, and his eyes had a restless, unsatisfied look in them. On the whole, he was altered very much for the worse; and though there was still about him a certain force of character, and a genuineness of devotion to what he deemed right, the man's whole nature seemed twisted and distorted, so that he was really incapable of judging justly. When

he had left Castle Karey he had returned to his home, there to endure as well as might be the tedious months of convalescence, and to struggle against his love for Miriam. Finally, he had resolved to put the Atlantic between them, and, dropping all correspondence with Max, had buried himself in a great American city, where he did his best to forget the past. The events of the summer had roused in him a keen sense of the wrongs of Ireland; but, unluckily, instead of falling in with men of the same calibre as Patrick O’Ryan, or noble-minded, unembittered Nationalists like Donal Moore, he was thrown among men of a very different type, and he had become a member of a Secret Society, whose extreme views and reckless plans of action were the despair of all the more sober reformers. As an agent for this Society he chanced now to be for a short time in London, and curiosity had led him that night to St. James’ Hall. It was with a very strange feeling that he listened to Doreen O’Ryan’s songs; was this graceful, white-robed singer indeed the little Irish girl whose merry laughter and lively talk had once amused him as they rowed about Lough Lee? Was that, indeed, the face which he had seen blanched with terror on that terrible afternoon? And had those hands, indeed, grasped the tiller and steered with desperate resolution over the water beneath which lay the body of James Foxell?

“Peacefully smiling, so let me be,
Living or dying, sweet rose, like thee.”

These were the words she sang. He wondered greatly if beneath her frank, sweet face, with its sunshiny look, there yet remained hidden away a dark,

ghastly remembrance of that past scene. Had all this applause and success driven out such memories? She was graciously vouchsafing an *encore*, and her choice had fallen on a well-known national song. In thinking of her country's deep wrongs, had she perhaps forgotten the fatal dispute she had so unwillingly witnessed in her childhood?

But suddenly all thoughts of Doreen were banished from his mind, for he caught sight of Miriam Hereford, and the beautiful face, with its Jewish outlines, which had so long lived in his heart, set every pulse within him throbbing wildly, and for the time made him forget the hopeless barrier that divided them. He had followed her home by an irresistible impulse, and her glance of surprised recognition, the eager light in her eyes, her impetuous movement towards him, filled him with delight. He slept little, and the next morning his feet seemed to turn naturally in the direction of Wilton Crescent. He paced slowly past the house, then returning, was just in time to catch sight of General Hereford's portly figure descending the steps, in close conversation with a lady in a long sealskin jacket; something of similarity in height and bearing made Desmond feel sure that this must be Miriam's mother. He walked after them at a discreet distance in the direction of Victoria, with no very settled purpose, but from curiosity, and from his acquired habit of shadowing people.

Arrived at the Metropolitan station, he reached the ticket-office exactly in time to learn the destination of Miriam's parents, took a ticket himself for the same station, followed them down the steps, and kept them in view as they paced up and down the platform wait-

iny for the train; more than once as they passed him, he caught Miriam's name. It was quite clear that the absorbing conversation related to her, and Desmond's curiosity became more and more aroused. He did not venture to get into the empty compartment, however, towards which the General steered his way. He got, instead, into the adjoining one, where, though effectually hidden from view, he could, when the train was not in motion, distinctly hear, above the barrier, all that passed.

"I told her," said the General, "that she had great influence with Max. She has only to draw him on a little, and he will propose fast enough."

"He certainly admires her," said his wife. "Nothing could be more desirable in every way than the marriage; but what more can I do? She is thoroughly wilful, and has refused every offer she has received."

"She was not unreasonable last night, as we drove home from St. James' Hall," said the General. "You had better get her invited to Monkton Verney for Easter, and, unless I am much mistaken, she will yield to our wishes. Miriam is a sensible—"

But here the train plunged into the echoing subway, and Desmond heard no more. He had heard enough, however, to fill him with uneasy compunction. What was he to do? To dream of marriage with Miriam was absurd. His whole past cut him off from any such possibility, nor did he feel disposed to break with his present mode of life, even could he with safety have done so. Should he see her once more and explain to her the hopelessness of the barrier between them? Unfortunately that was impossible; there was too much that he was quite unable to reveal. And, moreover, to be

brought face to face with each other would be but an ill preparation for the final parting. Yet somehow, he must prevent her from sacrificing her whole life, must at all costs free her from any lingering bondage to that past dream of love. He would write to her, would lead her to think that her marriage with Max Hereford was what he most desired. And in truth he could better bear to think of her as wedded to his old pupil, than as leading a forlorn life, and constantly incurring the displeasure of her parents. She was hopelessly lost to him. Why should she not marry Max? He would, at anyrate, take good care of her, and fill her life with every luxury that wealth could buy.

Making his way back to his dreary lodging, he spent the rest of the morning in the attempt to write what would in some degree satisfy him, but with small success; in the end he was obliged to content himself with the following lines:—

“Last night, after an absence of nine years and a half, I saw you once more, but had imagined that time had altered me too much for recognition on your part to be possible. That you knew me and would have spoken to me gives me a strange pleasure, even though I write this expressly to beg that you will do your best to forget me and to forget that I ever had the presumption to love you. The barrier of which I told you at Castle Karey will always exist, and there are now other reasons which make it impossible for me to remain long in this country, or to venture ever again to see you. My life is not wholly unhappy, for I have work which interests me, nor have I to look forward to a dreary old age, for those who adopt my present pursuit are seldom

long-lived. I shall not attempt to see my old pupil, but you might casually mention to him that you have met me, and that I am still in the land of the living. I am told that he is one of our most promising public speakers; if so, a man with his advantages ought to have a grand future before him. If he should some day win that which I have been forced to relinquish, I shall bear him no grudge; on the contrary, it would brighten the remainder of my life to think that you were at least established in a home not unworthy of you. And now, for the last time, I wish you good-bye."

The effect of the sudden shock of the previous night had been to keep Miriam in bed for the next four-and-twenty hours with a severe headache. Being a person of leisure, she yielded rather easily to any slight ailment. Doreen, with a similar amount of pain, would have gone about her work, travelled, perhaps, a couple of hundred miles, sung the same evening, and rattled home again the next day, enduring the discomfort as best she could. But Miriam had not herself and four brothers and sisters to support; she was at present supplied with every luxury in her father's house, and the only thing he expected of her in return was that eventually she should marry a rich man.

It happened, therefore, that she received John Desmond's letter alone, and in her own room, and that she had ample time to muse over the strangely-worded communication. What his life-endangering work might be she could not guess; possibly it was some sort of scientific research, likely to enfeeble his health. As for the barrier, she fancied that could only mean money or debt, for of any other difficulties she knew nothing.

There was, however, an absolute hopelessness about the tone of the brief note which made her feel that she must, indeed, do her best to obey him and to bury the past in oblivion. It was strange that he, too, should harp upon this same notion of her ultimate marriage with her cousin. Could it, indeed, be that she and Max were suited to each other? She had great influence with him, it was true, but in her secret soul she much doubted whether her influence was for good or ill. And then there was Doreen O'Ryan. Did he, after all, care for her? And was it only her fancy that Doreen, who was so sunny and light-hearted at all times, became just a little more bright and witty whenever Max was present? That her eyes became distinctly bluer, that a sort of glow came into her usually pale face, that her very voice had a more mellow ring about it? Surely it was no fancy, the girl did care; and Max, if he meant nothing by his attentions, had certainly treated her very badly. No; she would not step in between them, even to please her father and mother; she would not be made the cat's-paw to bring the wealth of Monkton Verney to her father's assistance. After all, she cared for Max far too much to marry him just for his estate. John Desmond should be obeyed; she would do her best to forget the past, but nothing should induce her to draw her cousin on in any way, or to promote the scheme which her parents so ardently desired.

Miriam had many faults, but she had good impulses, and she not unfrequently followed them. A knock at her bedroom door made her thrust Desmond's letter hastily beneath her pillow; she looked up with a smile at her mother.

"Are you better, my dear?" said Lady Rachel, anxiously.

"Yes, mamma, but I have not felt warm since last night's concert. I must have caught cold on the way home."

"There is great news for you," said her mother. "Your father has just heard that the Dissolution is to take place at Easter. It is much sooner than was generally expected. In a few weeks, you see, we shall be in the thick of the General Election. I am going to write this evening to your aunt, and propose that you go down with her to Monkton Verney. She will have a number of people to entertain, and constant coming and going, and it is just at those times that she so much needs someone to play the part of daughter of the house."

"Mamma," said Miriam, decidedly, "I am very sorry, but nothing will induce me to go to Monkton Verney for such an early Easter as we have this year. Why, Good Friday is on the 26th of March! Just think what the cold will be in that country house!"

"Oh, they will warm the house; and besides, you will have very good fun at the election. You had better go, my dear; your father particularly wishes it."

"Mamma," said Miriam, piteously, "please do not write to auntie. I know why you wish it so much, but don't urge me just now. I shall only hate Max forever, if I have to listen to all his election speeches. That sort of thing bores me to death. Do let us keep out of it. Take me abroad, and let us have a nice time on the Riviera while they are all talking themselves hoarse here."

And, then, next season, if Max gets into Parliament, I will perhaps think of what you so much want."

"We only want your good, my dear, and your best happiness," said her mother, reluctantly consenting to her suggestion as she left the room.

"My best happiness?" repeated Miriam to herself half dreamily. "I wonder what my best happiness would be?"

And then in fancy she saw the announcement in the newspapers:—

"A marriage has been arranged between Mr. Max Hereford, M.P., and Miss Miriam Hereford, his cousin, the only daughter of General Hereford."

Or again, it might be:—

"A marriage is shortly to take place between Mr. Max Hereford, M.P., and Miss Doreen O'Ryan, the charming and popular Irish vocalist."

She caught herself humming a quaint little song which Madame De Berg had given as an *encore* at the concert.

"I know not, no, not I, where joy is found!"

Suddenly she drew Desmond's letter again from beneath the pillow; she read it slowly, lingeringly—read something of his love for her between the lines,—and then suddenly broke into a passionate fit of weeping.

"It is all very well for mamma to talk of my best happiness," she thought to herself. "The only rag of happiness left to me is not to interfere with the happiness of other people."

CHAPTER XV.

“If sadness at the long heart-wasting show
Wherein earth’s great ones are disquieted;
If thoughts, not idle, while before me flow
The armies of the homeless and unfed—
If these are yours, if this is what you are,
Then am I yours, and what you feel I share.”

MATTHEW ARNOLD.

ON the Saturday afternoon after the news of the Dissolution had been made public, it chanced that Doreen was travelling back from Southampton, where she had been to sing in Haydn’s “Creation.” Ferrier, the well-known bass, and her old friend Warren, the tenor, who now treated her with the greatest deference, and no longer ventured to offer her three guineas for singing at a city dinner,—were in the adjoining smoking-compartment; they had laughingly supplied Doreen with all the Liberal papers, had seen that she was well wrapped up with a railway rug and provided with a foot-warmer, and then, to her great content, had left her in the empty compartment to her own thoughts. She wanted much to be alone and to have time to think, for the news had taken her altogether by surprise. Max had always imagined that the General Election would be in the autumn, and this sudden announcement had almost taken her breath away. It had filled her with hope for her country, and it had come at a very opportune moment in her own personal life. In April that four years of waiting for which she had stipulated would

come to an end, and she felt that in every way it would be better for her engagement with Max to follow rather than to precede the election. Her four years of public life had taught her to know the world tolerably well, and she was convinced that she would best consult her lover's interests by adhering strictly to the term of probation.

Yet it was with a sigh of glad relief that she realised how nearly the tedious waiting-time was over. The years had been happy, yet they had been beset with difficulties; and with an absolute trust in Max, she looked forward to her betrothal as to a haven of rest and peace.

Her face lighted up with happiness as they drew near to Firdale, and as once more she looked forth on the green meadows and the white tower of the church and the long avenue of elms on the ridge in the background. The familiar little station seemed more crowded than usual; a group of townsfolk had apparently come to meet some person of importance, and she was engrossed in watching the fussy movements of a little, officious, red-faced man who was giving a most obsequious welcome to the newcomer, when suddenly she was startled by Max Hereford's voice.

"Is there any room for me?" he said, with his hand on the door. His fresh, glowing face looked to her almost as boyish as it had done in the old Irish days.

"I thought you were in town!" she exclaimed, as he sprang in and took a place beside her, holding her hand in his, with a momentary glad pressure of greeting.

"I was obliged to run down yesterday to see my election agent," he explained. "And I was not without

hope that I might chance to meet you on your way back from Southampton. To find you like this, and without your usual duenna, is indeed good luck."

"I was staying with some friends of ours who live there, and so could dispense with Mrs. Muchmore," said Doreen, who, the moment she could afford it, had been careful always to take Hagar about with her, unless she was secure of Madame St. Pierre's company. "Who is that very grave-looking man that everyone is making so much of?"

"That," said Max, laughing, "is my rival, Mr. John Steele, and the small crowd of his supporters is made up of the oddest mixture of Firdale scribes and Pharisees, publicans and sinners."

"Is he popular? He looks a most depressing person."

"Oh, he is extremely popular; it will be a hard fight," said Max. "It will be easy enough for him to make the Firdale folk believe that their future welfare is bound up with the consumption of beer, and that it is absurd for them to be represented by a notorious temperance worker. By-the-bye, what colour shall we choose? I see they have already donned red and blue rosettes."

"What is your favourite?" she asked.

"White," he said; "which you will say is no colour at all. Now put your favourite with it."

"Oh, I am for the wearing of the green," she said, laughing. "That is but natural."

"Very well, that is decided; green and white, but none of their grass greens or apple greens. It must be one of the new greens—the shade of that dress you wore last summer."

She smiled to think that he should remember it, and in her heart she was pleased. There was a brief silence as the train slowly steamed out of the station, leaving the Conservative candidate looking somewhat uncomfortable and oppressed amid the motley crew surrounding him.

"Do you remember," said Max, in a tone which startled her, "the promise you made me?"

"Which?" she said, laughing and blushing. "I have made you so many promises. I have not forgotten that I promised to sing as much as you liked during the election, and I have a delightful song which will be exactly the right thing if I can get the composer's permission to sing it."

"Then you will certainly win the election for me," he said. "But it was of another promise I was thinking. Doreen, why must we wait any longer? Why—can you not—"

"Stay," she said, springing up, and crossing to the other side of the carriage. "There is Rooksbury. I never pass this bit of the line without looking at it. After the election we will climb it once more. I do not, indeed, break my promises; but please have patience till then." Her eyes, blue and tender and a little wistful, were lifted to his.

"You think I am going to be beaten by the Publicans' favourite," he said, smiling; "and you keep the Rooksbury expedition as a consolation prize for the vanquished."

"No, quite the contrary; nothing will persuade me that Mr. John Steele is going to defeat you; but when

you have won the battle, you may perhaps look on life with other eyes."

She took one final look at the fir-crowned hill, then returned to her former place.

"Did you look on life with other eyes after your success?" said Max, moodily.

"Well—no," she admitted, after a pause. "I don't know that I did; but men are different."

"I thought you were the one woman in the world who did not pass sweeping judgments on men."

"I don't judge them; I don't say that they are not so constant as women, but that they have a greater capacity for seeing more than one side of a question."

"There was more than a little touch of blarney about that," said Max, unable to help laughing at her expression. "Well, I will be patient if you bid me."

"You will keep your promise," said Doreen, with a mischievous glance, "and I, for my part, shall keep mine."

She did not, however, make any resistance when he took her little ungloved hand in his and kissed it, only defending herself by asking a prosaic question or two about the probable date of the Firdale election, and the ways in which she might be of use to Mrs. Hereford."

"Perhaps, however," she added, "your cousin will be staying at Monkton Verney; she must know so many of the people in the neighbourhood, and would be a much better helper."

"Unluckily," he said, "she detests the whole affair, and I heard only yesterday from my uncle that they are all going next week to Hyères. By-the-bye, Miriam wrote to tell me a curious thing: it seems that John Desmond

is in England once more; she saw him in the street. He just raised his hat to her, but seemed anxious to avoid speaking. One can understand that well enough. There is no doubt he was in love with Miriam in the old days; I only trust she doesn't care for him. It is hardly likely after all these years,—there are limits, I suppose, even to the constancy of women."

Doreen laughed and promptly changed the subject, not at all desiring to relapse into a discussion which she had purposely checked. And so they travelled swiftly through the long, undulating stretches of sandy country, with its heathery banks and dark fir-trees, talking contentedly, and enjoying to the full the unusual chance of a quiet interview that had fallen to them.

"Madame St. Pierre would scold me well were she here," said Doreen, as they drew near to London. "She has a dreadful theory that public singers should not tax their throats by talking in the train. I tell her that an exception must be made in favour of Irishwomen, who could not possibly sit mum throughout a whole journey. How wonderful it is to think that the next time we travel this line together the election will be over!"

She broke off abruptly as the thought suddenly flashed through her mind that the next time Max helped her on to the platform at Waterloo she would in all probability be betrothed to him. Her cheeks were still tinged with the blush that had suffused them at this thought, when Ferrier came to the door to offer to put her into a cab. He knew Max Hereford, having met him once or twice at Bernard Street; but to-day a latent suspicion that had long haunted him became a certainty. He sedulously waited upon Doreen, forstalled Max in

taking possession of her travelling-bag, and in fatherly fashion waited till she was safely ensconced in a hansom, then made his way homeward with a somewhat grave and preoccupied air.

"A nice enough fellow," he thought to himself. "But our little Irish *prima donna* will be lost to the profession."

Doreen found on her return a complication of family duties and an alarming pile of letters to be answered. Till twelve on that Saturday night she was hard at work, and she slept late on the Sunday morning,—not an ideal thing to do, or at all in accordance with a model heroine, but yet a natural enough proceeding on the part of an overworked artiste, whose severely taxed strength required more sleep than it was ever likely to get. Uncle and Aunt Garth, with their lives of steady routine and rooted habit of waking in the early morning, failed to understand how greatly this girl of two-and-twenty needed sleep, and how impossible it was for her, after the brain-exciting work she had been through, to sleep as they did during the first watch of the night. But shrewd Hagar Muchmore understood without any scientific training to help her; and on Sunday mornings, the only time when Doreen could afford to have her sleep out, Hagar was a veritable dragon, silencing the least attempt at noise on the part of the children with a sentence that made them feel like criminals of the deepest dye. "Can't you be quiet for one hour and let your sister have her sleep out, when she is toiling for you from week's end to week's end?"

The good woman's face was comical to behold when, on the morning after Doreen's return from Southampton,

Michael stole softly upstairs with the news that little Una Kingston had already arrived.

"Why, it's but nine o'clock!" she exclaimed. "And I never think of disturbing Miss Doreen till half-past on a Sunday. Whatever can have made her come at this hour of the morning?"

"Devotion to Doreen," said Michael; "and I believe she was told to come as early as she liked."

"Is it Donal that's come?" shouted Bride, in her loudest and most penetrating voice, running out from the nursery in high glee; whereupon Doreen, roused at once, opened her door and laughed to see the energetic way in which the boys suppressed poor Bride.

"I do believe," said Michael, "you have voice enough to fill the Albert Hall!"

"Don't scold her; it's high time I was awake," said Doreen. "Did you say Donal had come?"

"No, it's the infant prodigy," said Michael. "The prettiest little girl I ever saw, but seems to think everyone is an ogre in the house except you."

"Bring her to the nursery; I'll be ready in ten minutes. And, Mollie, make an extra slice or two of toast; I dare-say she will like a second breakfast."

So Una was piloted upstairs by the boys, of whom she was desperately afraid, into the snuggest little room she had ever seen. Even the two little girls made her shy, however; for she had been so long cut off from child life that she hardly knew what to make of her own contemporaries. Fortunately, no O'Ryan was ever troubled with shyness, and Mollie and Bride gave her the warmest of welcomes, relieved her of her hat and jacket, and politely inquired if she liked making toast.

"I don't know," said Una; "we never had toast in Germany."

"That's a mercy," said Michael; "everything is made in Germany nowadays, till one gets quite tired of the words. I'm glad they leave the toast-making to us."

"Try," said Mollie, courteously relinquishing the much-treasured toasting-fork. "It's such fun making it. Bride and me always make it on Sunday mornings for Doreen, and she lets us get her breakfast ready up here, so as not to bother the servants. Sunday is the nicest day in the whole week; we see much more of Doreen, and she never writes letters or does anything horrid, but just rests, and gives us a good time."

"Did you come so early to go to church with us?" asked four-year-old Bride, with the unabashed directness of her age.

Una blushed and hesitated. "Do you go?" she asked.

"Doreen always takes us in the morning to Mr. Osmond's church; but we don't stay as long as she and auntie do, you know, and it's really rather nice. Then we come out, and uncle takes us for a walk till dinner," said Mollie.

"Which church do you go to?" asked Bride, in her emphatic voice, her rosy, babyish little face beaming upon shy Una. "The boys go to the Oratory, and Hagar to the Congregational."

"I have never been in London," said the little violinist, colouring, "and I never used to go in Germany till I read Goethe's 'Wandelnde Glocke,' and was afraid the bell might come to fetch me."

"To fetch you?" said Bride, with dilated eyes. And

Una was beguiled into telling them the legend, until, what with toast-making and talking, she had quite forgotten her fears. Then Doreen came in, bright and cheery as ever, with a welcome which made the child's heart throb with delight, and the merriest of breakfasts followed, Una discovering that for once she really was hungry, and that there was something in toast one had made oneself that was specially good. Perhaps she had never in her life been so happy as she was that afternoon, when Doreen took her down to the Hospital for Incurables on Putney Heath, where she often used to sing on Sunday to the patients. To be alone in a hansom with her new friend, to be allowed to slip her little forlorn hand into the comforting clasp of those motherly fingers, to open her heart to one who would understand and sympathise with her, seemed to Una the perfection of bliss. Then, too, the spring day was as full of quiet beauty as a mild day in February can be, and it was rapture, after the imprisoned life she had led of late, to drink in the fresh air, and to feel that for once she had nothing to do but to enjoy herself.

"Do you always come here on Sundays?" she asked.

"Not always to this hospital, but generally to some hospital or infirmary when I am in London. You see it is the only way in which I can give at present."

"I never somehow thought about giving," said Una, musingly. "I wish, oh, how I wish, you would sometimes let me come too, and bring my violin. Do you think the people would like it?"

"I am sure they would, but I am not sure that you ought not to keep your Sundays quite free from any-

thing that might tire you, for you are very young for public life."

"Oh, that would not tire me; it is just perfect rest and happiness to be with you," said Una, with such a sincerity of devotion, that Doreen hardly knew whether to smile or to cry.

"Well, that is a very easily attainable piece of happiness," she said, with a kindly glance at the little fragile face. "You can come and spend every Sunday with me if you like."

The child's face lighted up until all the signs of over-pressure and care had utterly vanished, and it was once again the face of a child, radiant and unclouded and aglow with happiness. Doreen gradually learnt to understand her completely, for little by little Una told the whole story of her past life.

It seemed that from her earliest childhood Madame De Berg had been her evil genius. Of her mother she had no recollection whatever; she and her father had lived as best they could a more or less nomadic life, and she had had a succession of nurses and nursery governesses, with all of whom Madame De Berg had ultimately quarrelled.

"Cousin Flora used to swoop down upon us unexpectedly," said Una, "to see, she said, that all was going on well; but somehow her coming always set things wrong, and just as I had grown fond of my governess or my *bonne* she was dismissed. Then for a year we lived with Cousin Flora at St. John's Wood. I was always so dreadfully afraid of her, and just to avoid one of her scoldings got into the way of telling lies; even now she can terrify me into saying almost anything, and

yet there is nothing that one can exactly complain of. She never punishes me; it is only her dreadful tongue; but I would rather any day be whipped than scolded by her. I never told my father, having a sort of notion that grown-up people always stood by each other, and I was afraid I should never be able to make him understand how miserable I was. Perhaps he guessed a little, for four years ago last Christmas he took me to Germany to study under Herr Koner. They were very kind to me at Leipzig. Of course, Frau Muller may have cared mostly, as Cousin Flora says, for the money she received for my board, but I think she did care for me, too, a little. The food was not very good; but then she was poor, and had a married daughter who was always in trouble. And she was very kind, and at the Christmas tree would put quite a number of presents on my table. Cousin Flora says that was good policy, to keep me from complaining of the food. Do you think people are always kind just from self-interest?"

"No, I don't," said Doreen. "That is a horrible creed, and I could give you a hundred instances to the contrary, where people have been kind, though it was to their own hindrance. Was your father with you in Germany?"

"Only in my holiday time; then we used to travel about, and sometimes I was very happy, though often it was lonely in the hotels. I had a doll, though, that was just like a real child to me, and I used to pretend I was a very young widow, and was always begging my father to buy me a black dress. He never would, though; men seldom seem to like black," and Una looked down at

her mourning attire with an acute perception of how much her father would have disliked it.

"Was it in Germany that Mr. Kingston died?" asked Doreen.

"Yes; it was last September, at Baden. I had played there at a concert, and all had gone well. He was very much pleased that night, and kept speaking of plans for the future; how, when my education was finished, we would travel about the world together. But the next morning he was too ill to get up, and the doctor sent a sister to nurse him. She was very kind to me, and she did all that could be done for him,—only always it made me unhappy to look at her, because I was so afraid it would some day perhaps seem to be my duty, too, to become a sister and wear those dreadful clothes, and never play my violin again. You don't think it ever could, do you?" she added, looking up with her wide, grey eyes full of anxiety.

"No," said Doreen; "I think it is clearly your vocation to play the violin." Her tone of quiet decision and the little sparkle of humour in her blue eyes set Una at rest, and that "phantasm of the conscience" was laid for ever.

"We telegraphed to Cousin Flora and her husband to come," she continued; "but they came too late. He died the next evening. I was sitting with my doll by the open window, the room had grown quite dusk, when all at once he called to me from the bed, and asked me to play him '*Pieta Signore*.' I thought he must be much better; for, when I took the violin out of the case,—his own violin, which I had only been allowed to use for a few months,—he took it from me and tuned it

himself. I wish, oh, so much, that they wouldn't still make me play '*Pieta Signore*'; for always I seem to see again the room at Baden, and the sister in her ugly dress, and father's face looking like marble in the dim light. But Herr Rimmers always says it is one of my best things, so there is no help for it. Father gave a great sigh as I finished. I was afraid I had disappointed him; for, indeed, my hands were cold, and I had not played very well. But when I put down the violin and stooped down to kiss him, he caught me in his arms; 'I am proud of my *Herzblättchen*,' he said, and then suddenly his arms fell back from me, and the sister came quickly forward, and somehow from her face I understood that this was death."

The description touched a chord in Doreen's own life; her eyes filled with tears, and her heart went out more than ever to the desolate little orphan who had made so sudden a claim upon her affections. By this time they had reached their destination and were driving along the pretty approach to the Home for Incurables, with its lovely glimpses of distant country. Una was astonished when they were shown into the beautiful building to see that the faces of the patients were, as a rule, wonderfully bright, and that there was none of that dreary hopelessness which she had anticipated. Far too shy to speak a single word, she followed Doreen with loving admiration, listening to her cheery greetings to one and another, and then sitting in rapt attention to listen while Doreen sang "Come unto Him" from the "Messiah," ending with two or three hymns which the patients liked as well as anything, especially the familiar Vesper hymn which rang in Una's ears all the way

home. Surely, she thought, the words "union" and "communion" had that day gained for her a new meaning,—a meaning which must brighten and widen her whole life. By the time they reached Bernard Street tea was ready,—not on Sundays a mere drawing-room affair, but a regular children's tea, at which Mollie and Bride were wont to consume surprising quantities of bread and jam and sponge-cake. Una, though much afraid of Uncle Garth, soon found that the presence of the children thawed her shyness, and there was something so gentle in Mrs. Garth's face that in spite of a certain awe inspired by her quiet reserve of manner, Una felt sure that she should love her, and was perhaps better capable in some ways of appreciating her character than Doreen, whose spontaneous and demonstrative Irish nature still at times found it hard to accommodate itself to her aunt's reticence.

Sundays were not days of dull routine at Bernard Street, or of compulsory idleness, and Una entered with spirit into the matter which happened to be absorbing the children's mind,—the painting and pasting and cutting out pictures for a scrap-book destined for a Christmas tree at one of the "Sailors' Rests." Aunt Garth in the mean time read aloud to them, and Una found Kingsley's "Water Babies" so fascinating that she could hardly bear to wait a whole week for the next reading. When Doreen and Michael left her at the door of Madame De Berg's house, she felt as if she were coming back to a rather dreary earth, having had a little glimpse into another and much brighter region. Her life was of necessity hard and wearing, but Doreen's thoughtfulness

had at least rescued her Sundays, and the child looked forward to them as—

“Bright shadows of true rest. . . .
Heaven once a week;
The next world’s gladness prepossest in this.”

CHAPTER XVI.

“What is wealth, what is fame, what is all that people fight about,
To a kind word from her lips or a love-glance from her eye?
Oh, though troubles throng my breast, sure, they’d soon go to the
right about
If I thought the curly head of her would rest there by-and-by.”
FRANCIS A. FAHY, *Irish Love Songs*.

ON returning to Bernard Street that evening, Doreen and Michael found that Donal Moore had just arrived. When he was in London he not unfrequently dropped in on Sundays, knowing that he would probably find them all at home, and to Doreen there was always a sort of whimsical pleasure in watching the growth of that curious friendship which gradually sprang up between Uncle Garth, the hater of change, and Donal Moore, the ardent Nationalist. Sometimes when alone she would laugh aloud at the comical recollection of the contrast between their faces, or of the embarrassed nervousness of Uncle Garth’s aspect when Michael, who had a way of blundering into awkward topics with charming naïveté and frankness, only excelled by four-year-old Bride, had turned the talk upon Irish matters. It was perhaps as well that Mr. Garth chanced that night to be kept in

his study until supper-time, for inevitably the talk turned upon the coming elections. Donal Moore was in excellent spirits and was confident that the true wishes of Ireland would be manifested as they had never been manifested before, and that the dawn was breaking.

"If only my father had been spared for this time," said Doreen, wistfully, "how he would have worked!"

"True," said Donal; "yet one who knows all the ins and outs of political life could hardly wish him back to it. His innate love of fighting would have kept him to the last in the thick of the fray, and his health was too entirely shattered to have stood for long against such a strain."

"And how was it shattered?" said Doreen, speaking low and quickly. "It was the long years of imprisonment which killed him, and he was imprisoned merely for writing words which every liberty-loving Englishman would have written, had England been under the same unjust 'Castle' system."

"And yet," said Donal Moore, "ninety-nine intelligent Englishmen out of a hundred will tell you, and will really believe, that Ireland is governed as England is governed."

"Yes, it is easy enough to believe anything until you inquire into facts and really study the question," said Doreen. "But you have made one convert, Donal,—at least I feel pretty confident about him,—and that is Mr. Hereford."

"I met him last night and had a long talk with him," said Donal; "but he is your convert, my dear, not mine; he vows that you pledged him to work for Ireland when you were only twelve years old."

"As we climbed Kilrourk together," said Doreen, a dreamy look stealing into her blue eyes.

"He has the makings of a very fine fellow," said Donal Moore, thoughtfully, "but yet I hardly think he realises the difficulties that lie before him. It is not one man in a thousand who is unselfish enough to run the risk of spoiling his own career and incurring general odium for the sake of a cause which, after all, is not really his."

Doreen winced; it hurt her to hear Max discussed in such a calm, dispassionate, critical way. And had this man, to whom she had given her whole heart, only the "makings of a fine man" in him? After all, that was but a *façon de parler*; in one sense, everyone was in process of being made. What she was slow to admit was the unwelcome thought that Ireland could possibly be for him a matter of secondary interest and importance. Donal Moore had argued that the cause was, after all, not really his own. But was it not his own, when England for generations had been misgoverning and unfairly treating the Irish? Did not the responsibility of the past rest in part upon him? Was it not his plain duty to help in righting the wrong?

The talk was interrupted by the entrance of Uncle Garth, who took no sort of interest in the news of the Dissolution which was causing such keen excitement throughout the country; he greeted Donal with much warmth.

"I'm glad to see you, Mr. Moore; extremely glad. Doreen has perhaps told you our great news."

"No," said Doreen, with a merry laugh, "I left it for you, uncle; that is to say, I forgot all about it."

"A very great discovery has just been made," said Uncle Garth, his eyes sparkling; "someone just by chance happened to meddle with the head-dress of a mummy recently; the hair was coiled in bits of papyrus, and it was actually found that this was covered with writing; folds and folds of it were discovered merely in the hair of this one body, and there is great reason to hope that a rich store of information may be gradually acquired, as the hair of other mummies is gradually investigated. I can show you, if you like, the sort of thing that has been found"; and he bustled off to his study, while Doreen with laughter in her eyes looked mischievously at Donal Moore.

"Farewell to Erin!" she said merrily. "Henceforward the evening will be devoted to mummy curl-papers!"

Fortunately, during the Easter holidays, Doreen was less busy than usual, and was able to spend most of the time with Mrs. Hereford at Monkton Verney. Miriam, true to her decision, had gone to the Riviera, and wrote amusing letters to her aunt, describing the delights of the sunny south, and condoling with the poor victims who had to sit in dreary rooms, listening to her cousin's election speeches. She little guessed how keen a delight this was to Doreen, or how full of radiant hope was the whole of that busy fortnight.

The contest was likely to be a severe one, but fortunately it was fought in honourable fashion throughout; and though Max inevitably came in for vehement personal attacks with regard to the position he had taken on the temperance question, and was often greeted in Firdale streets by the singing of—

“D—— their eyes if they ever tries
To rob a poor man of his beer,”

yet, on the whole, Mr. Steele proved a vigorous and determined, but not an ill-bred, opponent.

Doreen found endless food for fun in the whole election, but, after one or two attempts, she wholly declined canvassing.

“It’s a hateful system,” she protested, when one evening at dinner she was urged by someone present to try her hand upon a few voters who were known to be of doubtful mind. “If I were lucky enough to have a vote, and someone came poking into my house at an inconvenient time, and wanted to know the exact state of my views and what I intended to do, I would be just like the pig that the man was driving over Westminster Bridge, and he couldn’t do it till he turned its tail where he wanted its head to go.”

“Of course,” said her neighbour at the dinner-table, “there must be no intimidation; only just a clear setting forth to them of Mr. Hereford’s views, and a little gentle persuasion to them to adhere to the right side.”

“I can’t help it,” said Doreen. “I was born to be a singer, not a canvasser; and after all, one can only do well what one thoroughly believes in. Now I will just tell you what happened when I went to see one of these obstinate old rustics who have the privilege of voting, which is denied to me. “Have you heard Mr. Hereford speak?” I asked.

“‘Oh, ay, I’ve ’eard ’un, and he be a rare fine speaker, so he be. But I be a goin’ to give my vote to the other chap this time.’

“‘I am sorry for that,’ I replied, ‘for I’m sure Mr.

Hereford will do more for the country's good in Parliament than the other candidate, and surely they told me you voted for the Liberal candidate at the last election.'

"'So I did, my dear,' he replied. 'But ye see this time the other chap, the Conservative, he be called John. Now John's me own name, and so says I to my wife, "Let's give old John a turn."' And he will give old John a turn, too, whoever goes to argue with him."

Max laughed heartily at the story.

"I am not sure that I grudge Mr. Steele that supporter," he said. "And, as you say, it is a shame that women should have no power to vote. I know well enough that their feeling here is so strong on the temperance question that they would certainly give us the victory."

"But the majority of women are surely Conservative," said Doreen's neighbour.

"So people say," said Doreen. "I rather doubt it; but even if that is the case, why are they to be kept out of a right which they actually enjoyed in olden times? Of one thing I am certain: they care more for what is really right than most men do. It is only because it seems to be expedient that men deny them their just rights. We are told in all the histories that the great principle set forth in Magna Charta was that there could be no taxation without representation, and that the law of the land is the same for all; but people seem gloriously to have broken that principle for generations."

"Your country blocks the way," said Mr. Farrant, the member for Greyshot, who was sitting at Mrs. Hereford's right hand. "When Ireland has Home Rule, there will, perhaps, be time to set this grievance at rest."

"Are we to have Signor Sardoni's song again to-

night?" asked Mrs. Farrant, as the ladies went to the drawing-room.

"Yes, if you are not quite tired of it. The people seem to like it, and I hear it now constantly whistled about the Firdale streets," said Doreen. "Are you not almost weary of election work, having just been through the campaign at Greyshtot?"

"This is so different," said Mrs. Farrant, her bright face clouding for a moment. "At Greyshtot it was a very bitter fight, and I am glad for my husband to be away from home for a little while: this thorough change will do him great good. He was returned, you know, by a majority of ten only, and I can't tell you what he has had to endure all through the election,—the raking up of the past, the gross exaggerations, the incessant slanders, or half-truths, bandied about by his opponents."

"What did he do to check them?" asked Doreen, with keen interest.

"As a rule he refused to take any notice whatever, unless the slander was likely to damage others also. He used to tell me of brave old Hannah More, who steadily declined to vouchsafe the least notice to the cruel slanders which saddened her life, even when they went to the length of accusing her of attempting the assassination of the Regent."

"I think it is the one thing I should resent more than all others," said Doreen thoughtfully.

As yet nothing of the sort had touched her; she had gained a high position in the musical world, and had won the greatest personal respect; the thought of having the least shadow cast upon her reputation made her shudder, and it was with more understanding eyes that

she looked at Donovan Farrant when, shortly after, the gentlemen rejoined them. Was this, she wondered, the explanation of that air of having lived through a great struggle which made him so curiously unlike Max? There was not so very much difference, after all, between their ages. Mr. Farrant might be a few years older, but he had the look of one who had fought a hard fight and had conquered, yet would bear all his life the scars of the conflict. What had his past been? she wondered. And was this what Donal Moore meant by a man that was "made"? Must Max also pass through some great ordeal before Donal would allow that he had more than the "makings" of a fine man in him? She turned from the idea with a shudder of dread, unable to endure the thought of any cloud coming over the fair horizon of his life. Everything save sunshine and prosperity seemed so foreign to his nature, his life had hitherto been so wonderfully smooth, that to think of danger or trouble in store for him seemed unbearable.

"You are tired," said Max, crossing the room to the little nook behind the piano, where she was somewhat absently turning over the songs in her portfolio in search of something fresh for that evening. "I am afraid we are letting you do too much."

She looked up into his fresh, cheerful face, met the eyes which always seemed so full of sunshine, and promptly dismissed that thought of a future ordeal in store for him. Surely nothing so incongruous as trouble or danger could ever come near Max.

"No, I am not tired," she said. "I was only thinking of something Mrs. Farrant told me of the disagreeables they had had to go through at Greysheet."

"Firdale has been better behaved," said Max. "But there is no knowing how it will treat me when Irish matters come to the fore, unless in the meantime you have succeeded in fairly bewitching them with your Irish songs. However, I am calmly talking as though I were already elected. We must not make too sure of victory."

"But your agent is in very good spirits," said Doreen. "He looked quite beaming when we met him this afternoon in the drive."

"He didn't tell you about the placards, did he?" said Max, laughing. "You know the whole place was covered with posters adjuring people to 'Vote for Steele and keep Southshire solid.' Well, some wag on our side amused himself last night by going round with paint-pot and brush and neatly inserting a T into every placard, so that they are bidden to vote for the Conservative to keep things stolid."

"How Michael would have enjoyed doing that!" said Doreen, with a smile. "It would have been a trick after his own heart. Mrs. Hereford does not look well to-night; I am glad she has given up the thought of going."

"The excitement is bad for her, but it will soon be over now; by the day after to-morrow we shall know our fate. Here comes the carriage; let me roll up your song."

Doreen ran upstairs to get ready, reappearing before long in the pretty white felt hat trimmed with dusky olive-green velvet, and the long green cloak lined with white fur, which she had specially devised for the election. It was a costume of which Max heartily approved, and it called forth Mrs. Farrant's admiration.

"It has been such fun singing at these meetings that I am quite sorry this will be the last time," said Doreen, as they drove into Firdale.

"The last, but the most important occasion of all," said Max. "To-night you have to rival the great gun Mr. Steele has managed to secure; a member of the late cabinet, dull as ditchwater, but, nevertheless, one who is bound to draw, for is he not a real live Earl?"

"How clever it was of your agent to secure the Town-hall in time! It is delightful to think that the other side will have to take refuge in the Corn Exchange, and to talk of Protection, and sing 'We don't want to fight,' in that depressing place, which is worse for sound than any room I ever knew."

"The true red-hot election temper is beginning to possess you," said Max, laughing. "For a singer, I consider that a most vindictive speech!"

"Well, well," said Doreen. "For such songs as they will sing the place is surely good enough. Now we really must have something better than that wretched glass-roofed shed."

By this time they had reached the town, and as the lamplight flashed across Doreen's eager face, Max found himself thinking of that evening years ago when he had driven with her to the Albert Hall before the first appearance in the "Messiah." She was far more excited now than she had been before her own ordeal, and there was a happy confidence in her manner which made his own heart beat high with hope. Max usually succeeded in life, and invariably he expected to succeed. This was not from conceit, but from a certain unconquerable hopefulness of temperament, and from the long spell

of unbroken good fortune which he had enjoyed. Save that terrible incident in Ireland, of which he had been the witness, no untoward event had occurred to cast a shadow over his life; and he was not of a worrying nature, and had quite ceased to feel Desmond's secret any sort of burden to him. If at times the recollection of that scene on Lough Lee, and the horror of witnessing Foxell's violent death, returned for a few moments, the discomfort was brief enough,—a mere temporary disturbance of his serenity. He lived in the present, and the present was full of excitement and hard work and eager hope. His great personal popularity in Firdale counted for much, and the cheers that rent the air as he and his companions entered the Town-hall would have stirred a far older and more seasoned warrior. Doreen thought no applause had ever sounded so sweet; accustomed as she was to such demonstrations, she was, nevertheless, moved almost to tears by this recognition of her lover, and all anxiety for the morrow left her: she threw herself unreservedly into the enjoyment of the present.

Perhaps everyone else was a little weary of meetings, but Doreen to the last entered into the spirit of the contest, and found endless food for amusement in the study of the speakers and of the audience. In the second row she could see a certain local magnate who had been lured to the Town-hall simply by the desire to hear her sing, and who, being of the other persuasion, listened to the speeches with the most comically glum face imaginable. Then there were the labourers, the older ones somewhat stolid-looking countrymen, the younger listening intently, and occasionally opening their mouths wide

for a great bellow of applause excessively startling to their nearest neighbours. The venerable-looking chairman, also a local light, was not without some comic aspects which tickled Doreen's sense of fun. He was an ardent politician, but a lame speaker, and he resorted to the simple expedient of introducing the beloved name of the great Liberal chief into his speech whenever he was at a loss, making a significant pause, which, of course, was filled with loud cheers.

After this, one of Doreen's songs came very refreshingly to the assembly, and with a comfortable sense of having stimulated her hearers and kindled their enthusiasm, she sat down again, eager to hear what sort of speaker Mr. Farrant would prove. One thing he undoubtedly possessed,—the faculty of arresting the whole attention of his hearers. He was no orator; he could not even be called an eloquent speaker, but there was a thoroughness about him which seemed to go straight to the consciences of the voters. His argument was weighty and convincing; he never stooped to abuse his opponents, but somehow contrived to raise the whole tone of the meeting, to fill the electors with a sense of the grave responsibility that rested upon them, and to make them understand in the clearest, most practical way, what the effect of voting for Max Hereford would be, and how greatly it might help in bringing about long-needed reforms. Doreen almost trembled at the thought of coming after such a speaker. How was she to maintain the lofty tone to which he had raised the minds of those present? Sardoni's song, which had grown so popular, did not wholly please her, somehow. It would be more in keeping after Max Hereford's stirring, enthusiastic

speech. She turned over the leaves of a book of Irish songs which she had brought with her, and selected, instead, a simple, stately, national air, one of those calls to battle, those stirring appeals to help in the national defence, which, like "The March of the Men of Harlech," appeal to all nations for all time. Max could just see her profile as she sang, and he thought he had never before seen her look so lovely. With one of those sudden flashes of perception by which truth generally makes itself known, he all at once realised to what an extent Doreen had influenced his life.

"If I win the election," he thought to himself, "if I am ever worth anything at all, it will be her doing."

And when presently he was received by the audience with deafening cheers, with an enthusiastic devotion which seemed to augur well for the morrow, this thought still remained with him, adding very much to the grace of manner which characterised all the more personal parts of his speech. Then, throwing off all diffidence, he flung himself, with fiery ardour, into the great questions of the day. As a speaker, he was the exact opposite of Donovan Farrant. Where the one was calm, logical, full of weighty arguments, the other was full of burning eloquence, of scathing denunciation, of glowing enthusiasm, which roused his hearers to the same pitch of strong feeling. Doreen, at the close, turned with a smile to Mrs. Farrant. "They ought always to speak together," she said. "Then every variety of hearer would be influenced and won."

The polling day passed off quietly enough, as polling days should; it was fine, but bitterly cold. Doreen, however, was in no mood to think of prudent considerations,

and drove hither and thither with Max and the Farrants, regardless of the cutting east wind, and thinking only of the fight that was being fought. Everywhere the Liberal candidate was well received, and when, in the afternoon, Mrs. Hereford came in from Monkton Verney and joined the others in the Committee Rooms, Doreen gave her a glowing account of the way in which matters were progressing.

Then the election agent came in with a yet more cheerful version of the day's doings, and Doreen wandered to the window, which commanded a good view of the market-place, and amused herself with watching the faces of the crowd below.

Much laughter greeted the cart belonging to a local dyer, who was zealously conducting tardy voters to the poll; and who, by way of a novel effect, had sacrificed an unlucky little Pomeranian dog, dyeing it half blue and half red, to the great delight of all the Firdale children. An encounter between this ill-used quadruped and Mr. Farrant's fox terrier, which had been decorated with a huge green and white bow by Doreen, was attempted by some mischievous person, but Waif magnanimously refused to quarrel with his blue and red rival, and only walked round and round him with a puzzled air, sniffing a little contemptuously, as much as to say, "Lord, what fools these mortals be!"

All at once loud cheers rose from the crowd, and Doreen's heart began to throb with eager pride as she saw that the greeting was in honour of Max, who was just crossing the broad open space between the Town-hall and his Committee Rooms. He raised his hat, and walked through the eager crowd with an air of good

cheer and hopefulness, which inspirited his supporters not a little. Doreen felt a glow of happiness as she reflected that he was the last man to be spoilt by success. Suddenly the cheering was interrupted by a series of groans and hisses; without glancing in the direction whence they came, Max entered the house and soon joined them. But Doreen, looking keenly down, saw that the prime agitator was a dark-haired man of about forty, whose face she was certain she had seen before.

"News telegraphed of ten more great Liberal victories," said Max, cheerfully. "That ought to help us to-day,—the flowing tide is with us!"

"Do look here one moment," exclaimed Doreen. "There is a man just below who tried hard to get up a demonstration against you, and I cannot think how I know his face so well."

"Doubtless it's old Friday that you once asked me about at a meeting," said Max, laughing as he recalled some past scene. "Miss O'Ryan," he explained to Mrs. Farrant, "was singing at a meeting ten days ago, and at the end of her song quite upset me by saying, 'Who is that old gentleman with marked features at the end of the room?' It was no less a hero than the notorious Firdale drunkard, an old scamp who goes by the name of Friday, and who takes refuge in the workhouse all the winter and drinks all the summer."

"Of course Friday would be your opponent," said Doreen, smiling; "but this man was a great deal younger, and I know his face perfectly well. There, look; he is just talking now to that tall man who spoke at the Monday night meeting. He must be abusing you; how

angry they are getting! See! see! there is someone throwing a flour bag at him. I daresay he deserved it."

"Stupid fellows!" said Max. "I wish they wouldn't defend me in such a fashion. I couldn't see the fellow's face, and now he looks like Lot's wife, and it's impossible to recognise him."

The unfortunate victim of the flour bag disappeared into a barber's shop a little lower down the street, and Max and Doreen, who had much else to think of, speedily forgot the incident. Had Max been present, however, when, after much washing and rubbing and brushing, the flour was at last got rid of and the victim of the outrage restored to his usual appearance, he would have deemed the affair worth a little more reflection.

Old Killigrew, the barber, had just been about to start for the polling booth, when his floury customer had arrived. He bustled about his shop in an important way, keenly enjoying the chance of learning all that had passed from the victim himself.

"Such things will happen on election days," he remarked soothingly, "and Lor' bless me, 'twould be tame enough if they didn't. Things 'av been mighty quiet here all day,—just a pane or two of glass broke by some of Mr. Steele's supporters, they tell me, down at the coffee-tavern; but then, what can you expect? 'tis but natural they should 'ate the coffee tavern, which is just the apple of Mr. 'Ereford's eye, and if 'e goes about speaking against the liquor traffic, why, stands to reason there'll be some of 'em will get a bit riled. For Mr. 'Ereford 'e doan't mince matters. 'E's young, yer see, and 'e 'its 'ard. Now myself, I'm all for moderate

drinkin', but these temperance folk they say as 'ow 'arf an' 'arf measures 'av never cured one drunkard, an' maybe they're right; yet for all that, I do like your moderate men; they smoothes folk down and are a deal more comfortable than these Radicals. Not but what I'm a goin' to vote for Mr. 'Ereford to-day. 'E's the best man of the two, an' I've a deal of respect for 'im, an' there's truth in what 'e says about Ireland."

"Don't you be led by him," said the victim of the outrage, emerging from beneath the towel wherewith Killigrew was rubbing his hair. "I know a deal more about Mr. Hereford than you do, and I advise you not to vote for him."

"Why, Heaven preserve us!" cried Killigrew, catching sight, in the mirror, of the face of his customer now restored to its proper hue, "'tis Monsieur Baptiste! To be sure, if anyone should know Mr. 'Ereford, why 'tis yourself that was 'is valet for years and years; not but what I've 'eard folk say that a man's never an 'ero to his valet."

"Mr. Hereford is certainly no hero to me," said Baptiste, whose English had greatly improved during his four years' absence from Monkton Verney.

As he spoke, there entered three more customers, burly, weather-beaten labourers, come to be shaved before going to the polling station. The eldest of the three, a man with great, brown, cow-like eyes, stared hard at the Frenchman.

"And what may you know about 'Ereford, eh, man? We were just a goin' to vote for un."

"You gowk," said his neighbour, "don't you see it's him that was servant up at Monkton Verney awhile ago?"

"Yes, my friends," said Baptiste, "I was in Mr. Hereford's service many years, and was turned off by him at a moment's notice in a fit of anger. That's the sort of man your Liberal candidate is,—a man with no gratitude, a man who will use you and then throw you aside like an old glove, a man that has no more control over his tongue and temper than a child, yet who will talk fair about temperance and reform and philanthropy. Curse him! He's a hypocrite! A whited sepulchre!"

"Softly, softly, my good friend," said the barber, swathing the burly form of the old labourer in a white sheet. "'Tis but natural you should resent being turned off at a moment's notice; but still be moderate, be moderate. I do like your moderate man who knows 'ow to smoothe matters over"; and with an expressive flourish he emphasised his words by delicately lathering the face of his new customer.

"Why did he give yer the sack?" said the youngest of the new arrivals, who for the first time in his life was to enjoy the privilege of voting.

"I will tell you," said the Frenchman, dramatically. "For years, as Mr. Killigrew well knows, I served him faithfully, nursed him when he was sick, performed a thousand duties that were not really part of my work, and then, having discovered that I knew of a damaging secret in his past life, and fearing that I might reveal it, he turned me out."

"I never 'eard nought against 'Ereford," said the man with the cow-like eyes, as he was released from the white sheet.

"That may be," said Baptiste, darkly. "He knows well enough how to hold his tongue. But mark my

words, if you knew about him all that I know, you'd as soon go to the poll and vote for the devil himself."

"And 'ow did you find this out, Mr. Baptiste?" asked Killigrew, his good-humoured, mild face puckered and wrinkled with anxiety.

"I found it out a little when I was in Ireland years ago at Castle Karey, and later on gained fresh light on the matter at Monkton Verney. The instant my master suspected that I was on the scent he dismissed me; but I was even with him: took service with a family in Dublin, and worked away at my clue. The time will come when I shall be able to expose him. But don't you men of Firdale be such fools as to elect him to-day. 'Twould be a disgrace to the town to have its member shown up to the world for the deceiver that he is."

"Good Lord!" said Killigrew, wiping his forehead. "Why, I've known 'im since 'e was a baby. It must be a mistake, man; 'e can't have been so much to blame as you thought. It was, maybe, a mere sowing of 'is wild oats."

"Pshaw!" said the valet, contemptuously. "Do you take me for an innocent, my friend? Is it likely that I should make anything of a mere bagatelle of that sort? I do wrong to speak of it openly, however; the time of revelation is not yet; only it vexes me to see you all hoodwinked, and to think how you will regret having voted for him when the law is on his track and he is imprisoned, and the world knows him as he really is."

"Well, mates, anyhow we'll be safest in voting for Steele," said the eldest of the old labourers, tossing down his twopence on the counter; and Killigrew, with a per-

turbed face, saw them stroll out into the street and walk off to the polling station.

"I can't vote against Mr. 'Ereford," he said, as he slowly swept up the floor. "But I tell you what I shall do, Monsieur Baptiste, I shall not vote at all."

Baptiste smiled an evil smile and left the shop with a sweeping bow. "A very wise decision," he said. "I felt sure that you wouldn't vote for him when you knew that he was not what he seems to be. *Au revoir*, Mr. Killigrew; you are a sensible man, and I am glad to think you will no longer be gulled by that hypocrite."

CHAPTER XVII.

"Oh, not more subtly silence strays
Amongst the winds, between the voices,
Mingling alike with pensive lays,
And with the music that rejoices,
Than thou art present in my days.

"Most dear pause in a mellow lay!
Thou art inwoven with every air.
With thee the wildest tempests play,
And snatches of thee everywhere
Make little heavens throughout a day."

ALICE MEYNELL.

THE Monkton Verney party drove home that night in excellent spirits. The result of the election would not be declared till the next day at noon, but the general feeling was that Max had won the seat, and the Conservatives, who at the previous election had had a large majority, looked anxious and dispirited. Max had been hard at work all day, and was thoroughly exhausted; to

lean back in the corner of the carriage, to catch faint glimpses of Doreen's face opposite him, and to listen to the cheery talk of his companions, seemed to him a sort of paradise of rest. The conversation happened to turn upon the ghost that haunted the Abbey, and then Mrs. Farrant told a tale of a nice, matter-of-fact, well-explained ghost, of the sort that one likes to think of at midnight, and urged that all ghost stories could be explained after a similar fashion.

"Nothing will make me believe that," said Doreen, who had a strong tinge of Keltic belief in the supernatural. "I will tell you a story of an Irish ghost which my father himself knew to be true: it is a very nice sort, not at all creepy, and it shows a trait in the Irish character which English people don't realise."

"What is that?" said Max.

"Their unceasing memory of kindness. An Irishman never forgets."

"Let us have the story," said Donovan Farrant. "This is precisely the right sort of light for it."

"Well," said Doreen, in her clear, mellow voice, with its delicious modulations, "there was once upon a time a well-to-do settler in Australia, who lived some fifty miles from a town. He was in the habit of riding in occasionally to draw out money from his bank, and on one of these rides, as he was returning with a good deal of gold upon him, he was stopped by an Irishman who begged him most piteously to lend him some money to get his passage back to Ireland. The man was in terrible distress, longing to get back to his people in the old country, who needed him in some great trouble, but absolutely without means to pay his fare.

“‘You are a perfect stranger to me,’ said the Englishman. ‘How am I to trust you?’ Yet all the time he felt sorry for the poor fellow, and inclined to believe in him.

“‘If you will only help me,’ cried the Irishman, ‘I will never forget it to you. Lend me the loan of the money, and I will pay you back, and, should death overtake me, sure then I’ll repay you in the next world.’

“The Englishman, touched by the appeal, lent the money. Years passed by, and nothing was heard of the Irishman. One day he was again riding along the same road, and again carrying an usually large amount of gold from his bank. He was feeling nervous that day, for there had recently been a bad highway robbery, and a solitary traveller had been robbed and murdered by two ruffians who were still at large. In the very loneliest part of the road he all at once felt that he was being followed. For awhile he tried to believe it was nothing but fancy; the way was so rough and hilly that it was impossible to urge on his horse, and at last, glancing round, his worst fears were realised; he saw that two villainous-looking men were rapidly approaching him. They drew nearer and yet nearer; in the clear atmosphere he could plainly hear their words.

“‘Now is the time,’ said one; ‘forward!’

“‘Hold, you fool!’ cried the other, with a sudden change of tone. ‘It’s no use; don’t you see there are two of them?’

“Amazed at their words, he glanced round, and there, at his right hand, was the Irishman, walking beside him. There was something in the look of him

that awed the traveller too much for words, yet he felt nothing but intense surprise and relief. The two ruffians turned and fled the instant they realised that there might be risk to themselves in attacking their victim, and the Irishman walked steadily on beside the traveller, until his home was in sight, then suddenly vanished. And the Englishman realised that the promise had been kept, and that, unable to pay the loan in this world, the man had doubly repaid him in the next. He understood that the Irish never forget."

"That is the best ghost story I ever heard," said Mrs. Farrant; "but did not the traveller speak to the Irishman?"

"I cannot say; he may have spoken. I tell the story as my father told it to me, and I believe he had it from the traveller himself."

"It is so difficult ever to get a story at first hand," said Donovan Farrant, "but I confess that sounds more possible to me than your Abbey ghost, in which I can't get up any sort of belief."

"I believe in him," said Doreen. "Indeed, I am rather afraid of him. Nothing would induce me to go to the Abbey after dark."

"You might go a hundred times and see nothing," said Max, laughing. "It is only on certain nights, according to old Goody, that he takes the trouble to show up. I wish to goodness I could lay him somehow, for it is a serious drawback to the place; two or three times, when we were anxious to let it for the summer, the plan fell through on account of this silly superstition. The ladies of the party objected to a haunted place, and it was no use to tell them that the ghost limited himself

to the walls of the ruins, and had never been so ill-bred as to trouble us in the house."

"You are going to lay it yourself, by restoring the ruin," said Doreen, smiling; and they fell to the discussion of plans for the projected buildings.

Doreen woke the next morning with an exultant feeling that the great day of her life had dawned, the day for which she had so long waited and hoped. She sang to herself from sheer lightness of heart as she dressed, and her bright face seemed to inspirit the others when they all met at breakfast. Afterwards, they drove into Firdale, to be present at the counting of the votes, and the keen air of that sunny April morning seemed to banish all the misgivings which had seized them during the night, and to buoy them up with hope. The waiting was terribly long; Doreen hardly knew how to endure it. Like one in a dream, she watched the sedate, impartial air of the returning officer and his assistant, the well-assumed calm of Mr. Steele, and the undisguised eagerness of her lover. She sat beside Mrs. Hereford, marvelling at her quiet patience, and from time to time, when the tension became unendurable, she tried to forget it all, and looked forth from the window at the crowd, which grew and grew, until by twelve o'clock the whole of the market-place was packed with people, eagerly waiting for the announcement of the poll. She had contrived to become so much absorbed in outer things, that when Mrs. Hereford touched her on the arm, she started back to a painful remembrance of the present, and saw that the supreme moment was at hand: with throbbing heart and panting breath she waited, hope struggling with fear, yet always coming off

conqueror. For a moment there was deathly stillness in the room; only from the outside came the subdued murmur of the waiting and expectant crowd. Then the returning officer announced the figures:—

For Mr. Steele, 700,

For Mr. Hereford, 697,

Conservative majority, *three*.

The room swam before her eyes for a minute; when she could see again, she found that Max was shaking hands with the new member courteously enough, but with a dazed air, as of one who has just received an unlooked-for blow. The action touched her; it bore witness to his innate courtesy, which even in such a moment was not to be laid aside. As the new member turned to Mrs. Hereford, she came close to Max, and slipped her hand into his.

“You know how to fail,” she said in a low voice, “and next time you will surely win.”

There was bustle and confusion in the room, the window was thrown open, the returning officer stepped on to the balcony to announce the result of the election, but the two lovers still stood a little apart; in the bright, hopeful blue eyes lifted to his, Max forgot for a moment his bitter disappointment.

Already he was thinking of the changes that would have come in his life, when that “next time” of which she spoke had actually arrived.

“Shall I have your help in the next fight?” he asked, below his breath.

“Why, of course,” she replied, with a glance full of sweetness and confidence; “you will always have it when you want it.”

He pressed her hand, and together they moved towards the window and once more heard the fatal announcement and the mingled cheers and groans with which it was received. Then the new member spoke a few pleasant words and politely hoped that he might always have to do with so honourable an opponent; and when the victor had bowed himself off the balcony, the crowd, after their usual somewhat trying fashion, demanded a sight of the vanquished, and Max, feeling rather as if he were stepping on to the scaffold at his execution, went out to receive an ovation from his followers which was not a little trying in the present state of his feelings. And yet there still lingered with him the warm pressure of Doreen's hand, and that cheering thought of the next time. In the strength of her hopefulness, he spoke a few straightforward, manly words, candidly owning his disappointment, confidently looking forward to future success. "Let our honourable defeat," he concluded, "spur us on till at the next election our cause may have an honourable victory."

After this, Mr. Steele's supporters dragged his carriage triumphantly through the town, amid great rejoicings, and old Killigrew watched the procession with satisfaction.

"'E is, after all, a very moderate Conservative," he reflected, "and a pleasant-looking, urbane gentleman; there's something, too, that pleases me in the way 'e cuts 'is beard. I'm not on the whole sorry that 'e's to be our member; 'e'll be a credit to the place, there's no doubt of that."

The old man stood on his doorstep, discussing the very narrow majority with some of the passers-by, and

trying to discover if there was any likelihood of a recount. Presently the sound of wheels roused him from this discussion.

"Why, there goes Mr. 'Ereford," he remarked, making just as low a bow as he had made a few minutes before to the successful candidate. "Poor fellow! 'e do look disappointed. I'm really sorry for 'im; there's a deal that's good in 'im, and 'e's a fine, 'andsome fellow, nobody can't deny, though I do sometimes wish 'e would grow 'is moustache just a trifle longer. But Lor' bless you, 'e don't think much of 'is looks, or 'e'd realise fast enough that 'is mouth was not the best feature 'e 'ad, and would be all the better for a little more 'air about it. All 'e thinks about is what is best for 'is speechifying. 'E do look mortal fagged, poor fellow, an' no mistake."

Max was in truth desperately disappointed, and like most high-spirited people, when he did go down into the depths of depression it was no easy task to get him out again. The Farrants were obliged to leave directly after the poll had been declared, and there was something very dreary in the atmosphere of the house when the three returned to lunch after that dismal morning's work. Mrs. Hereford and Doreen made brave efforts to talk during the meal, but Max was not responsive, and afterwards shut himself up in the smoking-room. As for Doreen, she fell fast asleep on the drawing-room sofa, more tired than she would have cared to own, by the strain of the election.

To sleep was well enough, but to wake to the remembrance of that crushing disappointment was hard, indeed; fortunately she was too sensible to waste time in

brooding over the inevitable, and springing up from the sofa, she began to work conscientiously at *Solfeggi*, then found some pleasure in singing "The Meeting of the Waters." This speedily drew Max from the smoking-room; he stole in quietly, not drawing near to the piano, but waiting in the oriel window at the further end of the room, forgetting for the time his miserable depression as he listened to the sweet voice and exquisite air. The words, too, fell soothingly on his ear.

"Sweet vale of Avoca! how calm could I rest
In thy bosom of shade with the friends I love best.
Where the storms that we feel in this cold world should cease,
And our hearts, like thy waters, be mingled in peace."

As the last chords died away into silence she heard his step approaching.

"Oh, is it you?" she cried, her face lighting up. "I never heard anyone come into the room."

"You played Orpheus to my Eurydice," he said, smiling, "and witched me out of the inferno of the smoking-room and of my dismal reflections. That song is, after all, the most beautiful of all the Irish melodies."

"I sang selfishly to drive out my own dismal reflections," she replied. "I took Moore's advice, you see," and with a smile that was sweet, yet half mocking, she turned over the leaves of the book and pointed to the lines,—

"Friendship's balmy words may feign,
Love's are e'en more false than they;
Oh! 'tis only Music's strain
Can sweetly soothe and not betray!"

"Do you believe that?" said Max.

"Why, no; not a bit," she replied, with a little rippling

laugh. "What a curious creed one would have, if it were necessary to believe all that one sings!"

"What should you say to a walk up Rooksbury?" said Max, new life seeming to fill him as he watched her sunny face.

She turned a little on the music stool, and took a rapid glance at him.

"I think," she replied, "you are too tired for a climb after all that you have been through."

"Does that mean that you will have nothing to say to an unsuccessful candidate?"

"I don't break my promises, but we should perhaps climb better if—if—" she hesitated.

"If we climb hand in hand?"

"Yes."

Her eyes, which had met his for a moment in a glance of perfect comprehension, were cast down now; her hands trembled a little as she locked them fast together in her lap.

"Doreen!" he cried, "we seem always to be drawn together by some trouble or disaster. But to-day I had made so sure of success; to-day I had hoped all our dreams of long ago were to be fulfilled. How can I dare to ask you to be my wife at such a time as this? I, who, at the best, feel so unworthy of your love?"

"I could not have loved you so much had you succeeded," she said, lifting her face to his, with a light of such happy trust, such perfect love about it, that Max was almost overwhelmed.

"My dearest!" he cried, folding her in his arms, "this is worth waiting for."

And, in truth, the unexpected event of the morning

had greatly altered and inexpressibly deepened Doreen's feeling for her lover. His success would have delighted her; she would have been full of eager excitement and joyous pride. But his rejection stirred within her that passionate sympathy, that absolute devotion, which she felt for her unhappy country.

The afternoon which had begun so heavily passed away in a sort of dream of delight. As for the election, it was forgotten with all else belonging to the outer world, and neither of them had the least consciousness of time. They might have sat together in the cosy corner beside the hearth for hours, if Mrs. Hereford had not after a time interrupted them. One glance at the two of course told her the whole story. She came towards them, smiling.

"Are you ready for tea, children?" she said, smiling. "By a happy impulse I was moved to order it in the oak parlour, which looked more snug and cosy for such a small party, otherwise you might have had Thomas breaking in upon you with the tea-tray!"

"Doreen has not rejected me this time," said Max, stooping to kiss his mother. "And let us hope that Firdale will follow her example and only keep me waiting a few years."

Perhaps under other circumstances the day of her only son's betrothal might have been a trying time for Mrs. Hereford, but coming after the disaster of the morning, the glad reaction was most exhilarating, and dearly as she had long loved Doreen, she had never loved her quite so well before. No one else, as she was well aware, could have driven the cloud of disappointment from her son's brow, or made him bear the thought

of the long hours of wasted work so patiently and uncomplainingly.

"And here have I been wasting my sympathy on you the whole afternoon," she said, laughing. "I left him in the smoking-room, bound hand and foot by Giant Despair. How did you manage, Doreen, to draw him out of the dungeon?"

"I think, perhaps," said Doreen, blushing, "he remembered, as the pilgrims did, that he had a certain promise."

After tea the two lovers climbed Rooksbury together to see the sunset. The wind was still cold and blustering, but they cared nothing for that. Doreen only wrapped her green cloak more closely about her, and stepped briskly forward, feeling ready in the strength of her new happiness to walk for miles.

"I wear my election cloak to give it a new and happy association," she said, laughing, as they climbed slowly up the hill beneath the stately pines.

"I think you should put it away for the next election," said Max. "Moreover, it is not convenient for us now; I can't get at your hand. A sealskin jacket would be a hundred times more comfortable; I shall get you one."

"That would be beautiful for America next winter, if we go."

"You are going to America?" he said in dismay.

"Oh, nothing is settled; I must talk it all over with you," said Doreen; "but the St. Pierres think of making a tour in the States. We should be away from September to February, and they are most anxious that I should accept their offer. Financially, it would be an excellent

thing, but I have not yet been able to face the thought of leaving the children for so long."

"You don't seem to take any account of me," said Max, with a reproachful smile.

"Indeed, I do," she replied wistfully. "It is for your sake that I think I might screw up my courage to consent to the plan. You see, by going to America I should earn just double what I could earn in England, and so I should be all the sooner free."

"Why will you let this miserable money question stand between us any longer?" pleaded Max. "You know all that I have is yours."

"Yes, I know," she answered, pressing his hand; "but all the same, Max, I cannot let you marry the family. You must let me provide for the children, and somehow it takes much longer than I thought it would take. Perhaps I am not a good manager, but though I work hard, the money seems somehow to melt, and a good deal will be needed to start the two boys in life, and to get a really comfortable provision for Mollie and Bride. Then there are so many expenses in an artiste's life; dress is a very heavy item, and with regard to it I have had to buy my experience. You men are so much better off in that way,—always able to wear black."

"I am thankful you can't do that," said Max. "I should like you always to be in white; nothing suits you so well."

"Yes," said Doreen, laughing. "You said so long ago, and you have no idea what a struggle I made to meet your wishes, but it was just ruination. The dirty floors in the artistes' room, and the constant coming on and off the platform, make white dresses the trial of

one's life. And then comes the next bitter piece of bought experience,—the dyer. Oh, I had a lovely white Liberty silk, and in an evil moment, having worn it thoroughly dirty, sent it to be dyed peacock blue. It came home looking no better than alpaca,—perfectly ruined. I shed tears over that dress, but afterwards we had some fun about it, drawing lots whether it should be made into frumpy frocks for the children, or given to the Little Sisters of the Poor, or sent to the rag and bone shop.”

“You might be trusted to get fun somehow out of the direst mishap,” said Max, laughing. “It was after that disaster with the dyer probably that you insisted on wearing for so long a black satin dress which I detested. It always made me think of that woman who was hung in black satin, and proved unexpectedly a benefactor to her race, by sending it out of fashion for years after.”

“How long ago everything seems!” said Doreen. “The time itself has passed quickly, and yet it is almost like looking back on another life to think of that day when I met you on the steps of the British Museum,—that last day of my miserable waiting-time.”

“The day when you wanted me to congratulate you on singing at a city dinner,” said Max, laughing. “I remember very well how I hated the city magnates who were going to requite you with three guineas.”

“You will never understand how a drowning man catches at straws,” said Doreen. “Besides, it was not only the getting an engagement that made me so happy that day. Do you suppose it made no difference to me to find that after all I had a friend in London?”

"But you knew so many of your fellow-countrymen in town."

"I had not come across many of them then, and Donal Moore was away in Ireland that spring. It was quite the saddest and loneliest bit of my life. There was not a soul to whom I could really talk."

Max smiled. "You will never make me believe that you were long silent," he said; "that is against nature. You mean there was no one to whom you could confide secrets."

"I have no secrets," said Doreen. Then a sudden cloud and smile flitting over her face: "At least, no secrets from you, and only one that must be kept from the world. But there was no one with whom I was really in touch. Then you came, and with you all other good things."

"What are we to wish this time at the wishing-tree?" said Max, as by-and-by they stood together at the summit of Rooksbury, and once more looked over that wide, exquisite view. It was glorified now in the sunset light, and the first hues of early green were bursting out in bush and hedgerow, while the larger trees still stood out brown and bare, relieved in places by the dark pines.

"What are we to wish, darling?" he repeated, looking down tenderly into the bright, winsome face beside him.

"There is nothing left to wish for," said Doreen, dreamily. Then, awaking from her heaven of peace to the recollection of the struggle of the morning, she made a little exclamation, half of penitence, half of amusement.

"Why, what am I thinking of!" she cried. "Of course, we must wish for your success at the next election!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

“Since then, through all the jars of life’s routine,
All that downdrags the spirit’s loftier mood,
I have been soothed with fellowship serene
Of single souls with Heaven’s own light endued.”

JOHN CAMPBELL SHAIRP.

“I WOULD give something to know what the world in general will say to your piece of news,” said Michael, as on the following evening he sat talking to Doreen over the nursery fire.

Mrs. Muchmore had a laudable habit of retiring very early to bed, on such nights as her mistress did not require her attendance at a concert, and the nursery was the general resort of the family, being one of those delightful rooms that possess the supreme merit of snugness,—a quality which in a room corresponds to charm in a human being. Its window had a dull prospect, its light paper was the reverse of æsthetic, its carpet was merely what Mrs. Muchmore termed a “Kidder,” and yet, somehow, it was the ever-cheerful “house place,” available for every purpose, and with an extraordinary elasticity about it, accommodating itself in a wonderful way sometimes to two or three inmates, sometimes to a dozen.

Doreen sat stitching away at a dainty little low bodice, which was being altered for the next week’s work.

"I hardly realise yet what *you* say," she replied; "and that matters to me more than anything."

"Does it?" said the boy, smiling, and evidently well pleased at the words. "Well, I say, in the words of the old butler when he learned that his mistress no longer needed him, 'But what be I to do?' Max is a jolly good fellow, though, and I'm awfully glad for him."

"I shall never say I no longer need you, dear boy," said Doreen, tenderly. "And you will do as the old butler did; you will stay. I am not going to be married yet awhile, and by the time it really happens you will probably have got an appointment somewhere, and will, of course, always look on our home as yours until you marry and set up for yourself."

"I shall have to go abroad before I can make anything of a living," said Michael; "and Dermot has brains enough to get a scholarship at Oxford, if he tries; but that still leaves you with Mollie and Bride."

"And you think I could do without them?" said Doreen, smiling reproachfully. "Even for Max I couldn't do that. How did Uncle Garth take the news, by-the-bye?"

"Oh, he was greatly pleased. First the news of the election made him chortle, and then when it came to your engagement to Mr. Hereford, he grew quite talkative. I never heard him say so much in his life except about a mummy."

"I take it as a great compliment that Uncle Garth should put me on the same level as a mummy!" said Doreen, laughing.

Apparently Aunt Garth was equally pleased; nothing could have made her talkative, but happily sympathy

does not depend on words, or England would be a dreary place. She gave Doreen what a girl so greatly needs at all times,—a sympathy more ready to listen than to suggest; and her great pleasure in the engagement did something to still the longing for the dead father and mother which inevitably came to mar Doreen's complete happiness.

Naturally, Max Hereford's relations were not so well pleased. The General was greatly disturbed when the news reached him on the Riviera. He had not much regretted the loss of the Firdale election. It might have been convenient to have Max in Parliament; but it went greatly against the grain to think of a Hereford being on the wrong side. On the whole, the General was glad that the Firdale folks, by a majority of three, had elected the Conservative candidate. But when his late ward wrote to announce his engagement to the Irish *prima donna*, all his family pride rose in arms.

"It would be bad enough," he protested, as he paced to and fro beneath the palms with one of his friends, "if the boy had married any other girl out of his own set. But that he should have chosen Miss O'Ryan of all the women in the world, is past bearing."

"Well, my dear fellow, you know class distinctions are not what they once were," observed his companion, comfortingly; "it's rather the fashion to be in with all the celebrities, the actors, and public singers, and all the Bohemians that our forefathers despised. And I have always heard that Miss O'Ryan is as good as she is charming."

"Oh, it's not to the girl herself I have any objection," said the General; "but consider what the father

was! My dear Garwood, I assure you that man was mixed up with every wrong-headed movement of his time. As a young man, he was implicated in the Smith O'Brien rising of '48, and was in jail then for some months. Then, in '65, he was sentenced to penal servitude as a Fenian, and at the time of his death he had taken to what he was pleased to call 'constitutional modes of agitation,' and was an ardent Home-ruler. Now, frankly, would you like a son or a nephew of your own to marry into such a family?"

"Is she the daughter of O'Ryan, the Fenian?" exclaimed the other, evading a direct reply. "Well, I never heard that before. I remember reading, a few years back, an account of his death. They say it was his time at Portland that ruined his health, and such conditions of life must have borne hardly on an Irishman accustomed to very different surroundings. Of course, I can understand that the match doesn't precisely please you. But what would you have? We can't expect the young people to think of our feelings. That sort of thing is out of date. And, after all, when Miss O'Ryan is once married, and has retired from public life, the world will soon forget all about the Fenian father; she will probably become a pronounced Conservative, and will lead your nephew back into the right fold."

"Well," said the General, half mollified, "I could almost forgive her parentage, if she would really do that."

Happening to catch sight of his daughter at that minute, he hurried across the rough beach to impart the

news to her. Miriam was sketching under the shade of a red parasol. She looked up saucily, as her father approached.

"Letters!" she exclaimed, with a smile. "I knew you would hear from Max to-day. He will write a long account of his defeat, which we saw in the papers."

"On the contrary, he writes a long account of something much less satisfactory," said the General, ruefully. "He is engaged to Miss O'Ryan, my dear, and I am extremely vexed with him."

Miriam naughtily clapped her hands for joy.

"Now you will not tease me any more about him!" she exclaimed, "and that dreadful prospect of being forced to marry a philanthropist will no longer hang over me. It is the best news I have heard for an age, papa; and Doreen is one of a thousand, and will make him as happy as possible."

"You don't seem to think anything of what the world will say to such a marriage," said the General, irritably. "To think of that convict's daughter being mistress of Monkton Verney is enough to try the patience of Job."

"It is odd when you put it in that way," said Miriam, reflectively. "How well I remember the shock it was to us all at Castle Karey, when she—a little scrap of a girl with a great bush of dark hair, and a shabby frock much too short for her—announced that her father was a Fenian prisoner, much in the same tone in which I might have told anyone that you lived through the Indian mutiny, and were a V. C."

"Yes, yes, like all her race, she is wrong-headed and perverse," said the General, with a sigh. "A nice, well-

mannered girl, with a fine voice, I quite admit, but Irish, —so dreadfully Irish.”

In the profession, the news of Doreen’s engagement was received somewhat differently. Mr. Boniface had imparted the news to the first arrivals in the artistes’ room, at the Evening Ballad concert after the election, and a little babel of question and surmise instantly arose. Was Max Hereford the sort of man who would insist on her retiring, or had he some sort of artistic feeling? Was he anything of a musician himself? Was it in the least likely that he appreciated the prize he had won? and so on. Ciseri, the accompanist, who adored Doreen from a respectful distance, was in despair at the news, and Ferrier himself, though not wholly unprepared for the tidings, seemed depressed by them.

“We all wish you joy, my dear,” he said, when by-and-bye Doreen arrived with Mrs. Muchmore in attendance, “but we are nevertheless extremely sorry to hear of it.”

Doreen stood looking at them for a moment, then burst out laughing, with the delicious, irresistible laugh of one who is utterly happy.

“You look as if I were going to be buried, rather than to be married!” she exclaimed.

“And so you are, my dear, from our point of view,” said Clinton Cleve, putting his shaky old hand beneath her chin and raising the sweet, radiant face a little, so that he could the better see it. The veteran was, of course, privileged; all the world had been at his feet, and Doreen was touched and pleased by the kindly words he spoke to her. But all the same, she knew that Max would never understand the good fellowship of the

artistes' room, and that little details might grate on him just because he had been accustomed to a somewhat more constrained society. For the first time she seemed able to see all things with his eyes, and a little shadow fell on her happiness, when Ferrier said to her,—

“Is it decided that you retire on your marriage?”

“Nothing is decided,” she replied. “I am just a little afraid Mr. Hereford may wish it. That is, unless I can make him understand that life without my profession would be at best a crippled life. In some ways it is so difficult to make anyone who is not an artist understand anything about it. People talk as if art were a mere pastime, to be taken up or laid aside at will. I do really believe that many of them think a singer can sing a song, or a composer produce an opera, or an author write a novel, or a painter paint a picture, as easily as a housemaid can turn on a tap and fill a water-can.”

Ferrier laughed.

“We must try to persuade your *fiancé*,” he said, “that to take you away from public life just now would be something very much like a crime.”

“Yes, I shall turn him over to you,” said Doreen, gaily. “He is so fair and open-minded, that directly he sees anything, he will act upon it, though it were ever so much against his own wishes. He is one of the very, very few Englishmen who really do try to understand and feel with Ireland, and to do so is against all his interests.”

“All?” said Ferrier, with a humorous glance. “I should have thought he had every inducement to devote his best energies to your nation.”

"Oh, he doesn't do it to please me, I assure you," said Doreen, "but because he really sympathises with the oppressed; he would feel for Ireland just as much if I belonged to any other country."

"No doubt, if you still espoused Ireland's cause," said Ferrier.

"No, no; not at all, at all," said Doreen, laughing. "I see you do not understand how utterly unlike he is to other people."

"But I do understand how insufferably dull other men seem in comparison," interpolated Ferrier, smiling good-humouredly, as he quitted the room for one of his songs.

The congratulations of Madame De Berg were of a somewhat acid nature; her very politeness seemed venomous, and she took a spiteful pleasure in hurling the news at Una Kingston, who turned pale, and shrank into her shell of reserve, from which Ferrier and Mr. Boniface tried in vain to draw her. Only Doreen possessed the power of reaching the shy little girl, and, happening to return to the inner room when no one else was present, she instantly understood why the tired little face of the child-violinist looked more wistful than ever.

She gave her one of those sunny, cheerful greetings, which always seemed to fill Una with new life. The child at once thawed, and became her true, best self.

"Oh, Doreen," she said, "I do mean to try and be glad for you, but I do so wish Mr. Hereford had waited a little longer."

"You hard-hearted child!" said Doreen, laughing. "But don't be afraid, you have not lost me; and who

knows whether, after all, I shall retire when we are married? I don't at all want to play the part of the 'nightingale in the cage,' as Mr. Boniface says."

"Is the time fixed yet?"

"Oh, no; and it can't be just yet. Don't talk as if it were some catastrophe! Why, you, who know Mr. Hereford, ought to do nothing but congratulate me!"

Una liked Max well enough, but she was jealous of him, and she did not consider him worthy of Doreen; but she gulped down her jealousy with a heroic effort, and turned to other matters.

"It is decided that I go to America in the autumn," she said, sighing. "I do wish they would have let me stay here."

Doreen made an ejaculation of regret.

"They will certainly kill that child before they have done," she thought to herself. "Whom are you going with?" she asked aloud. "Your agent gave you no choice in the matter, I suppose?"

"None," said Una. "One might as well be a slave. But it is the losing you I shall mind most. It is M. St. Pierre who is getting up the tour, and I would rather go with the St. Pierres than with strangers. And it is just possible that Cousin Flora will not go. She said M. St. Pierre was already in treaty with another soprano, whose reply would have to be considered first."

"I am that other soprano," said Doreen, quietly.

The child gave a cry of delight, then her eyes filled with tears.

"But I *know* you will not come now that you are going to marry Mr. Hereford," she exclaimed piteously.

"On the contrary, I think that is the very reason why

I shall be able to come, and to make up my mind to leave the children. It is an exceptionally good offer, and I rather think it would be wrong to refuse it. Now are you not grateful to Mr. Hereford?"

Una's face became radiant.

"To have you for all those months!" she cried. "Why, it will be like Heaven! And I who had been dreading it all so much! Are you sure, quite sure, that you will accept it?"

Doreen had already talked the matter well over with her lover, and had only been waiting for some "leading" that should guide her to a final decision. The leading seemed plainly given by this forlorn little child-musician, who so sorely needed someone to lighten the burden laid upon her by a tyrannical agent and a foolish guardian.

"My mind is made up," said Doreen, stooping to kiss the little girl. "I am coming with you, and we will have a real good time."

CHAPTER XIV.

“Government against the will of the people governed is the very definition of slavery.”—GRATTAN.

WHETHER it was the unwelcome prospect of the long absence from home, or the result of the hard work during the election, or merely the effect of all the excitement caused by her engagement, Doreen's health flagged as the spring advanced. She made light of it until her voice began to suffer, then, after a little persuasion from Mrs. Garth and Mrs. Hereford, she consented to be overhauled by a doctor, who decreed that she must have three weeks' rest. It was in vain to protest that the season was at its height, and that she had work which she could ill afford to leave; the authorities were inexorable; and so it came to pass that in June, when society was hard at work amusing itself in London, and when the workers were hard at work in providing the means of amusement, three happy travellers escaped from the great city, and early one summer's morning steamed into Dublin Bay. The plan had been Mrs. Hereford's, and it was easy to see that it was likely to prove a success. Doreen, who had joined them at Euston on the previous night looking thoroughly exhausted, seemed like a different creature as she stepped on to the deck of the steamer on that bright June morning, greeting her lover with a glance of such radiant

happiness that Max was well content with the decision of the Firdale electors, and rejoiced in being free for this Irish holiday.

"You have lost the blue-and-white look which you had last night," he said, "in spite of all the hours of travelling."

Doreen laughed. "They always say those dreadful blue shadows round my eyes make me look like a willow pattern plate! But the very first breath of Irish air drives them away, you see. And what a good crossing we have had! It might have been a lake. Come round to this side and let us see if the Wicklow Mountains are clear. Yes, look! there they are! There is the dear old Sugar-loaf, and there is Bray Head, and away in the distance must be Glendalough, right in the heart of the mountains. Let us keep my birthplace for the last of all,—the *bonne bouche*; but, perhaps, to you it will not seem so perfect as it always did to me."

"On the contrary," said Max, "it is, of course, my Mecca! The birthplace of the Irish nightingale."

"A very pretty speech, but unluckily it will not do; there are no nightingales in Ireland. It is a pity; but then, on the other hand, there are no snakes; St. Patrick banished them,—to England I think."

"Come, come, no reflections on my country," said Max laughing. "How pretty Kingstown looks in this early morning light! How long is it since you were over here?"

"Oh, I have been here every year since my *début* just to sing in Dublin and Belfast and Cork, but never to stay for more than two or three nights since we had to go into exile. To think of three weeks' holiday in

my own land is wonderful, and I am glad we are to have a night in dear old Dublin, so that I may show you some of the places I remember so well."

Doreen proved an excellent cicerone; she knew Dublin as one knows the home of one's childhood, with an absolutely indelible knowledge not to be gained in later life. Its streets and squares were so impressed upon her brain that invariably they formed the background of her dreams, often after a highly incongruous fashion, and she volunteered an amount of miscellaneous information which surprised and amused Max. In this house O'Connell had once lived; in that other, on the left side of the road, the Duke of Wellington had been born; up that dull-looking street, near an archway, one of the informers who had betrayed the Fenians had been shot. Here, on the gateway of the Castle, was the figure of Justice,—her face to the Castle, as an Irish patriot had once remarked, and her back to the city and the Irish people. There was a curious story, too, about the scales which were balanced in her hand: during the Fenian trials the scales had fallen to the ground.

"That must be one of your Irish legends," said Max, sceptically.

"No, not at all; it is strictly true, I assure you," replied Doreen, and to her lover's amusement she appealed to a gray-headed official, who confirmed her story; whereupon she carried off Max in triumph to see the tower whence Red Hugh escaped, and to hear all manner of stories about his thrilling adventures among the Wicklow Mountains.

Of Irish history, Max, like most Englishmen, was supremely ignorant, and Doreen's talk and the close

study of the people they met during their tour served to make him growingly conscious that he was a foreigner of a totally different race, one who could only hope to understand the true state of the case by making an effort of the imagination and reversing the position of the two countries.

“‘Put yourself in his place,’ seems to me the motto which every Englishman should adopt before trying to study the Irish,” he said once to Doreen, when the frightful misery of the people on the Galtees had given him some little insight into the crying evils of the present system.

“That is what most of your countrymen are so utterly unable to do,” she replied sadly. “England is my mother’s own country, and I have good reason to love it well; but I must say that, though the English at heart love justice, and will often go out of their way to champion those whom other people oppress, yet they have a great tendency to bully the weak who belong to them. Their attitude to Ireland always makes me think of that philanthropist at whose meeting you spoke last week; he will plead most movingly for the miserable people in the sweaters’ dens at the East End, but I know from personal observation that he tyrannises over his own wife, and will hardly let her think, much less speak, for herself.”

Max resolved to come over again to Ireland alone, and to try to get a more intimate knowledge of the great problems which have so long baffled every effort at solution. It was impossible, while travelling with his mother, to remain long in that desolate region; the accommodation was too rough; and they were obliged to move on

to Killarney, where the exquisite beauty of the scenery charmed them back for awhile into their lovers' paradise of hope and joy, and entire confidence in the good time coming.

"It seems strange that I, an Irish girl, should never have seen Killarney before," said Doreen, "and that you saw it years ago, and will be able to lionise me. But, you see, when we lived here there was never any money to spare. I remember delightful summer holidays at Bray among the Wicklow Mountains; but such a long journey as this would have been out of the question. And then when I was seven, father was sent to prison, and all the money was needed to take us over to England for those disappointing visits which the authorities allowed every now and then."

"Were they disappointing?"

"Yes," she said, her eyes filling with tears. "I wonder how you would have felt if, after months of separation, the Irish government allowed you to come over from England to Ireland, and then when you were just longing for a talk with your father, you were stood up behind a grating opposite a sort of iron cage, into which they presently put a prisoner, cropped and shaved, and dressed in frightful garments marked with the broad arrow. But oh, dear," she said, laughing, "what fun my father did make of those clothes! How well I remember his making a most grim-looking warder shake with laughter as he joked with us about the old-fashioned knee-breeches and hose worthy of a fancy ball."

"Then a warder was always present?" asked Max, calling up a vivid picture of the little Doreen he had

known years ago, and thinking what a sunbeam she must have been behind that grating in Portland Prison.

"Yes; the warder was always in the space between us and the cage. It was that which made it so disappointing; the time went so fast, and all the while one felt far away. At first, too, the warders were very brutal men, and they loved to treat the Fenian prisoners with every sort of insult; but as time went on, all that was changed, and during the last year they had the kindest warders and were treated leniently. I believe the last time we went the warder really was sorry that he had to say no when Michael begged so hard to come into his little inclosure, so that he might kiss father through the bars."

"I often wonder that you are not more bitter against the English," said Max, glancing at her.

"That would be against all the traditions in which I was brought up," she replied. "Never was there a more gentle-hearted man than my father. It is the fashion to think of the Irish as bloodthirsty ruffians, who delight in shooting people from behind a hedge; but though, of course, we have some bad people over here, just as you have criminals in England, the bulk of the people are exceptionally sweet-natured and kindly and gentle, ready, of course, to fight for their rights like any other brave race, and naturally hating to be tyrannised over by another nation whose religious views clash with their own."

The two were driving, as they talked, towards the entrance to the Gap of Dunloe, and their driver now interrupted them.

"They'll be upon you in a minute, sir, wanting you to take ponies for the Pass.

And sure enough, a regular cavalcade bore down upon them, and trotted along by side of the car, shouting and gesticulating, each man urging the claims of his own steed, and declaring it to be the best, the most sure-footed, and the prettiest pony in all Ireland.

"Such a sorry-looking set of nags I never saw," said Max, laughing. "Do they always attack travellers like this?"

"Oh yes, sir," said the driver; "but don't you be too yielding to them. We're not nearly come to the Pass yet."

So the twelve horses galloped along in attendance, their owners laughing and talking, making desperate offers which gradually grew lower and lower, and taking the whole affair as a sort of joke.

"I never drove before with a mounted escort in attendance," said Max, while Doreen laughed till the tears ran down her cheeks, so absurd was the whole scene, so inexpressibly funny the faces of the bargaining guides. At last, for the sake of peace, they selected two ponies from the twelve, Max choosing the best-looking nag, and Doreen picking out the most merry-looking guide; and so, somewhat plagued by the buglers, the blind fiddlers, the stocking-knitters, and all the other tourist paraphernalia, they made their way through that wonderful mountain pass, skirting desolate lakes, and shadowed on the one side by the dark crags of the well-named "Purple Mountain," on the other by the beautiful Macgillicuddy Reeks, whose grand outlines were clearly defined against the soft blue of the sky, which seemed

all the more lovely after the heavy rain of the previous day. Descending again into the valley, they walked down to the Upper Lake, where Mrs. Hereford, who had come from the hotel in a boat, was to meet them; and, after a merry picnic on the shore, they set off for that exquisite round of the three lakes, which in its endless variety is nowhere to be surpassed. Doreen sang softly for very happiness. The Gap of Dunloe had been slightly spoilt by the importunate tourist-hunters, but the lakes were perfect, and all the legends and songs which she had learnt in her childhood seemed full of new meaning to her as the boat glided past Eagle's Nest and Old Weir Bridge, shooting the rapids, passing the lovely little nook on Dinish Island, catching beautiful glimpses of Ross Castle and of the ruins of Inisfallen, and ever with the thought that this was her own country, the land for which her father had laid down his life, the country which had been the Holy Island in the past, and for which bright days were, she hoped, in store.

"I should much like to see Castle Karey once more," said Mrs. Hereford. "How would it be if we spent a few days at the hotel near the church there? They tell me it is a very comfortable one." Max glanced a little anxiously at Doreen.

"Should you like it?" he asked.

"Yes," she said truthfully; "with you I should like it very much."

So once more they journeyed to the well-known place, and since the Castle was, as usual, empty, they were able to visit it once more; to walk down the avenue under the very trees which had sheltered them on that wet afternoon ten years ago; to wander through the

deserted rooms, recalling the day when they had tried their fortunes over the fire; and to roam through the wood to the fernery where the Keep still stood, looking only a trifle damper and more dreary than it had done on that summer day in the far past.

Doreen's face was unusually grave as once more they sat together on the rustic bench, where years before she had taken that solemn oath of secrecy.

"What are you thinking of?" asked Max, trying to read the expression in her intent blue eyes.

"I was wondering what had become of those others who share our secret," she replied; "wondering where Mr. Desmond is, and what has become of old Larry and his wife."

"I have a great mind to go over to Lough Lee and find out if they are all right."

Doreen turned pale.

"Then I too must come," she said. "After all, though, I shall hate to see the lough again; yet it seems but right to find out what became of the old people. What could we take them?"

"You know best what your country folk would like," said Max. "I might understand the cottagers at Monkton Verney."

"The Irish are not so different as all that," said Doreen laughing. "There is nothing that old Larry would enjoy more than a shilling's worth of tobacco, and Norah had better have a packet of tea."

"One touch of nature makes the whole world kin," said Max, with a smile, as they left the fernery, and passing out through the first of the gates found themselves on the highroad. "Here, by-the-bye, is the exact

spot where you and I first met; you were standing just over there by the hedge with Michael tucked away behind you, and the agent's dog had a bit of your red cloak between his teeth."

"How frightened we were, and how poor Michael cried!" said Doreen.

"While you, with a white face, kept bravely assuring him that it was only the dog's fun, and that he wouldn't hurt," said Max.

"And oh, what a relief it was to look up and see you, and Mr. Desmond, and Miss Hereford," said Doreen. "I think I never was so glad to see anyone before."

"Or since?" said Max, teasingly.

"Well, I can't say that," she said, laughing. "Where was it that we met next? Wasn't it in the wood near the waterfall?"

"To be sure," said Max. "We thought the angels must have come down to the world again, but suddenly discovered that it was our little Colleen Bawn."

"Colleen Dhuv," corrected Doreen. "My hair was as dark then as it is now."

"Yes; but we called you after the red cloak which Miriam told us went by the name of a 'Colleen Bawn.' We saw the glimpse of red through the trees, and the song, we found, was too plaintive for an angel's song. It was, 'I wish I were on yonder hill.'"

"Ah, to be sure, a lovely air, but a very doleful ditty;" and Doreen, with that unconventionality and freedom from self-consciousness which characterised her, sang as they walked along the country road the sweet old Irish song:—

“‘I would I were on yonder hill
'Tis there I'd sit and cry my fill,
Till ev'ry tear should turn a mill,
Is go d-teidh tu, a mhúirnin! slan.
Since my lover ceased to woo,
I have roamed the wide world thro'
To heal the heart he broke in two,
Is go d-teidh tu, a mhúirnin! slan.’”

“You have spoilt me for singing pathetic ballads!” she exclaimed, breaking off with a smile. “I am far, far too happy to make a good artiste.”

The next day, leaving Mrs. Hereford to pay a duty-call at the Manse, and to enjoy the lovely grounds of the hotel, Max and Doreen set off, on an outside car, for Lough Lee. The day was not unlike that memorable day in the past,—somewhat grey and misty, but with fitful gleams of sunshine. They dispensed with a driver, having no mind for a third person; and Max, though he professed to long for an honest English dog-cart, was glad enough to have the reins, and, in his heart, rather liked the motion of the jaunting-car. They were merry enough at starting, but as they drove through the narrow pass among the mountains, and gradually approached the too-familiar place, a silence fell between them. Doreen, at every abrupt turn in the road, feared to catch sight of the lough, and as they gradually descended, gaining nearer and nearer views of the mountains which surrounded it, her heart sank. At last the cold gleam of steely grey flashed into sight. She softly touched her lover's arm.

“There it is, Max,” she said with a shudder.

He glanced at her a little anxiously.

“I don't believe I ought to have brought you here,”

he said. "Yet I fancied it might be a sort of relief to see it once more all these years after. How deserted it all looks! Ah! there is the little place where we hired the car. We will put up the horse there, and then walk along the shore. That is, unless you would rather go in the boat."

"No, no; let us walk!" said Doreen, a sort of horror seizing upon her at the idea of gliding over that cold, grey sheet of water, beneath which lay the body of the dead agent.

Max helped her to alight; it relieved her to hear him ordering tea to be ready in an hour. Something in his matter-of-fact tone reassured her, and she began to look forward to gladdening the hearts of old Larry and his wife with the presents they had brought. To reach the little cabin, it would be necessary to walk the whole length of the lake and round to the extreme corner. She tried to forget the horrible scene in the past, and the wild grandeur of the mountains in advance of them appealed to her and for a time diverted her thoughts. She began to talk of other things, and to gather a bunch of the beautiful London pride, or Erin's pride, as she said it should be called, which grew in great abundance. Suddenly an exclamation from Max roused her.

"The cabin is gone!" he cried, looking across to the head of the lake. And there, sure enough, on the little plateau above the steep, rocky shore, Doreen saw that sight which is so painfully familiar in Ireland,—the rude outline of a stone cabin, deserted, roofless, telling its piteous tale of unwilling emigrants, or of harshly evicted tenants.

"Let us ask whether they have emigrated," she said.

"See! there are three men over to the left, cutting turf in the bog. I daresay they will know all about it."

Turning away from the lake, they made their way towards the turf-cutters, who all paused to watch them as they approached, leaning on their curiously shaped spades, and evidently not sorry to be interrupted in their dull, monotonous work.

"Can you tell me what has become of old Larry Cassidy, who used to live here some years ago?" asked Max, addressing a pleasant-looking man of about thirty.

"It would be ould Larry that lived in the cabin by the lough that you are manin'," he replied, crossing the deep trench at which he had been working and coming towards them. "He's dead, yer honour; both of them are dead and buried these many years."

"Both dead!" said Doreen, with a little shiver. "But why is their house roofless and deserted?"

The man gave her a curiously cautious look, and apparently debated within himself what answer he should make.

"I'm thinking maybe that the lady is Irish herself?" he said, eying Max somewhat more doubtfully.

"To be sure I am," said Doreen. "You'll have heard of Patrick O'Ryan that was so long imprisoned? I am his daughter."

"Sure then you're as welcome as the flowers in May," said the turf-cutter, his whole face lighting up and his manner altogether changing. "And proud is it that I am to be spakin' with ye. As for ould Larry and Norah, it was a cruel, hard case. Most of the land about here belongs to Colonel Mostyn, a rale good landlord, the best in the country. But as luck would have it, the bit down

yonder belonged to Lord Byfield, and he, why, he niver comes near the place, and his agents have iver been a rascally crew. There was Mr. Foxell, who disappeared ten years ago,—the people they just hated him, and many think he was put out of the way. Then afterwards there was another, just as bad, named Stuart, and 'twas he that ruined ould Larry. 'Twas all for the laist little bit o' ground he'd made with his own two hands out of an ould stone quarry. Many's the time I've seen the crathur carryin' soil on his back to the place, and it took him years to do it. Then by-and-by comes the agent and wants rint for this small little piece of land; but Larry he had sinse and spirit, and he stuck to it, that he'd made the land himself, and that 'twas his and not Lord Byfield's. The magistrates they agreed with him, and said 'twould be a cruel, hard thing to make him pay for his own work. But the agent he made Lord Byfield carry the case up to Dublin to the courts, and they said the law was against Larry, and so after all the crathur had to pay the rint. But by that time he'd fallen ill with the worry of it all, and the ould wife died, and Larry he lost spirit and said 'twas no use to work."

"And then," said Doreen, "the English tell us that we Irish are a lazy lot, and that all the distress is our own fault."

"When did this happen?" asked Max, with a pang of remorse for having neglected to come before and see how the sharer of his secret was prospering.

"Sure thin, yer honour, it must be many years ago now that he died. We did what we could for him, but there was no rousin' him up. He would sit by the hour

together, spakin' niver a word, and at last after many threats there came the day when he was to be evicted; and thin it was that a bit of the ould spirit stirred again in him, and he barred the door and resisted to the last. Thin the agent gave orders to break open the door, and they dragged out the ould man and threw out his bed and his bits of goods. 'Twas little enough he had, the crathur, and we did what we could to hearten him up, and told him he should come home with us. But it was niver a word he was spakin', being past himself entirely. It was a cowld day in March, but there was no gettin' him away from the place; he stood yonder, all of a tremble, starin' at the men as they tore down the roof that he'd thatched himself nate enough in past times, and it wasn't till the agent had taken his cruel face out of sight that we could coax him back with us. My wife, she made him warm himself by the fire, and I gave him a drink of potheen; but still he niver spake a word; only once late that evenin' as we sat round the hearth we saw him stare across with a kind o' wonderin' look at my wife as she sat there with little Dennis on her knee. He was a twelvemonth then, and sat up straight and strong on his mother's lap and stritched out both his hands to the ould man, for he was iver a friendly hearted child. And Larry he stared and stared and seemed pleased like, but still said niver a word; only we saw him cross himself, and his lips moved as if he was sayin' a prayer, and it's my belief that he thought he'd seen the Blissed Virgin and her Son. After that he fell asleep peaceful enough in the chair by the hearth, and my wife and I went to bed, but in the mornin', when we looked round, Larry was gone.

“‘He’s back to the ould home, you may be sure,’ I said to my wife, and went out to find him; for we thought the cruel cowld wind would make him ill. But I’d not gone many steps when it came to my mind that I’d niver said any prayers that mornin’, and I jist turned aside to St. Patrick’s Cross before walking to the other end of the lough in search of Larry. Well, bein’ in a hurry, I said my *Pater Noster* as I went, to save time, and was jist at the end of it, and about to kneel at the steps and say an *Ave*, when I saw that someone was there before me. It was Larry. He was with his two knees on the lowest step, and his head restin’ against the foot of the cross. I let him be for awhile, niver noticin’ that he was too still by half; for the wind it blew his white hair and a ragged cloak he had to and fro. But by-and-by, when it came to me that he was sayin’ his prayers too long, I touched him, and he was as cowld as a stone. Then I took him up and carried him back to our cabin,—he was no great weight; but he was dead, yer honour, God rest his soul,—stone dead.”

Doreen moved away, unable to keep back her tears. She heard the turf-cutter telling of the wake they had given him, and of how people came from far and near to it; but her mind had gone back to the past, and she was thinking of the kindly old face of the “Potato man,” as Michael used to call him, and of the piteous desolation which had befallen him towards the close of his hard, monotonous life.

Max looked very grave when he rejoined her.

“I have told that fellow that we will just walk on to the cabin,” he said; “and I gave him the things we

brought. What a miserable thing it is to come back to a place too late!"

"It was through no fault of yours," she replied, ever ready to make excuses for him. "The eviction had nothing to do with that past time. The same thing about the ground made out of the disused quarry struck the new agent; poor old Larry's eviction was but hindered for a time by Foxell's death."

"Oh, if I had but been a few years older then!" exclaimed Max. "If I had only had the sense to induce John Desmond to speak the whole truth! The affair would have been a shock to my mother, and his idea of silence was honourably meant; but how much better it would have been to have had the whole thing above-board from the first!"

"Yes," said Doreen, musingly; "a man in Mr. Desmond's position—practically an Englishman—would have had justice done him. They could scarcely have called it murder. I wish so much that we had not lost sight of poor old Larry and his wife. We ought to have thought of helping them."

"I ought to have thought," said Max. "You were a mere child; and after all, inquiry might possibly have roused suspicion at a time when the authorities were trying to discover the truth about Foxell's death. Yet I might have helped him quietly."

"How strange it is to think that we two alone in the whole world know about it," said Doreen. "It almost frightens me to think that. My old childish fear of telling it in my sleep comes back now and then. Ah, this is the place," she added, shrinking closer to him.

"Just here they fought together, and here is the overhanging rock from which he fell."

But to Max that scene in the far past seemed less tragic, less terrible, than the tale they had just heard of the poor, ruined, miserable old man, ruthlessly dragged from the home that was dear to him, and dying brokenhearted at the foot of the wayside cross. More and more he began to feel that he was partly to blame for Larry's eviction and death. He might easily have managed to send money to the old man. It had simply not occurred to him. He had contented himself with hoping that Lord Byfield's new agent might be kindhearted, and a great contrast to Foxell, and then he had done his best to dismiss as far as possible from his memory the whole of that disagreeable incident in the past.

Max, in common with most people of a sanguine temperament, sometimes fell into the mistake of too easily banishing uncomfortable topics from his mind. He was lacking, too, in that strong sense of responsibility which would have suggested that to all time Desmond and Doreen, and those other two who shared in the secret, had a special claim on him. That habit of putting away unpleasant thoughts was at once his strength and his weakness. It made him full of buoyant trust in the present; it fitted him for his work as an ardent reformer, enabling him to kindle enthusiasm and hope in a thousand hearts; but it also occasionally led him into error, as in the case of old Larry, making him neglectful of plain duties which many a less noble nature would not have left undone, and at times blinding him to the truth in a way that sorely puzzled those who loved him. This

sad story had startled him now into a perception of things as they really were. He stood at the threshold of the roofless cabin, conscious of his own shortcoming, saddened and humbled by all that he had heard. The very stones seemed to cry out to him to rise and do his part in helping those to right who suffered wrong. Indignation and strong sympathy replaced the sort of vague, hesitating pity with which he had hitherto regarded Irish grievances and Irish hopes. He drew Doreen closer to him.

"Dearest," he said, "I promised long ago on Kilrourk to speak for Ireland, and I renew the promise. But there is much I might have done that has been left undone. It is you who must help me in the future, you who must keep me true to my best desires. Do you promise?"

"I do," she said, with the same grave strength of simplicity with which she had taken her confirmation vow.

He pressed her to his breast. It seemed to her that the kiss that passed between them was the kiss of her life. Surely no other could ever be like it.

Slowly they retraced their steps, paused to speak a few words to the turf-cutter, and stood for a minute by St. Patrick's Cross, Doreen instinctively saying a prayer for Larry and his wife, Max too entirely wrapt in sad thoughts of the old man's hard fate to dream of any such thing. Then, after a silent tea at the rough little inn, they drove back again, Doreen, at the last moment, putting a gold coin into the hand of the child Dennis, who stood beside the jaunting-car, looking at the travellers with those friendly blue eyes of his, which to old Larry had seemed indeed divine.

CHAPTER XX.

“Sweet Wicklow Mountains! the sunlight sleeping
On your green banks is a picture rare.
You crowd around me, like young girls peeping,
And puzzling me to say which is most fair,
As tho’ you’d see your own sweet faces
Reflected in that smooth and silver sea.
Oh! my blessing on those lonely places,
Tho’ no one cares how dear they are to me.”

LADY DUFFERIN.

“DOREEN looks to me a little sad and depressed,” said Mrs. Hereford, as that evening she walked with her son in the pretty gardens of the hotel.

“She is tired,” said Max, “and this place is rather relaxing,—it makes me even lazier than usual,” and he yawned comfortably with the same expression of relief and satisfaction as a dog.

“I don’t like to hear you call yourself lazy,” said his mother, glancing with pardonable pride at the well-knit muscular frame and at the fresh, glowing face that was so dear to her.

“It is a melancholy truth, though,” said Max, smiling. “Had I not had you beside me, mother, I should have been the idlest vagabond in all creation. If I do any work in the world at all, why, it is nurture, not nature, that is to be thanked for it. I am lazy enough to be heartily glad now that Firdale is represented by a Conservative, and that John Steele is at this moment grilling in the House of Commons, while I walk in this garden of Eden with you.”

“Well, I, too, am glad we are all here together,” said

Mrs. Hereford, smiling. "Doreen does not look as strong as I could wish, though, and I can't help thinking that she is fretting over old memories. No doubt this place makes her think of the days when she was here with her mother, and I well know that there is no time when a girl so longs for her mother as when she is just engaged."

"How well you understand her," said Max, touched by the words. "I think probably the place is a little trying for her; what do you say to moving on elsewhere?"

"Let us go to County Wicklow," said Mrs. Hereford. "I know she longs to see the Valley of the Seven Churches, where she was born. Perhaps, among her native mountains, she will get back her strength; when one comes to think of it all, the hard work and the anxiety and sorrow and then this sudden reaction of feeling has been a great strain upon her."

"Yes," assented Max, and he wondered to himself what his mother would have said could she have known all that Doreen had been called upon to bear.

It was arranged that they should go to Glendalough in two days' time, and Doreen seemed delighted at the prospect. They were fated, however, to come across yet another sad story as they drove to Kilbeggan Station. The driver, who had quickly discerned that there was no risk in talking openly to them, told them many details with regard to the various estates they passed.

Donal Moore had estimated the evictions throughout Ireland during the last six months at one thousand, and they questioned their coachman as to the state of things in the neighbourhood.

"There's one eviction case ye can see with yer own eyes," said the man. "I know the farmer meself, and he was a good, hard-working man; but there were over-many children, and then for three years the harvests were bad, and to pay the rent was just as difficult as to fill a sieve with water. Doheny would have paid, though, if his landlord would have given him time, but he showed no mercy at all."

"Was he one of the Castle Karey tenants?" asked Max.

"No, yer honour. Mr. Pethrick was his landlord, and it's true enough that he himself was pressed for money; but still he keeps up his carriage and pair, and his town house and country house, and has his guests and his amusements and a grand display. Such things can be afforded, but time for a tenant half ruined by the failure of the crops,—that he couldn't afford. They evicted Doheny two months since, and pulled down his well-built house that had cost him two hundred pounds, and now he's forced to shelter in a miserable shanty that we shall pass in a few minutes. There, miss, to the right, on that bit of waste ground; that's what he's come down to, and he a respectable farmer."

"You don't mean that wretched shed!" said Doreen, glancing at a miserable collection of loose planks and furze, roughly put together so as to bear some distant resemblance to a hut. "Why, no pig in England would be allowed to sleep in such a place. Look! there are some children playing outside. Poor little things, what a fate for them!"

"Stop!" cried Mrs. Hereford; "let us get out for a minute. We can, at least, give them our lunch."

And so the three travellers got out of the carriage, and to the no small delight of the evicted people, climbed up the bank to the door of the wretched shed, where a turf fire blazed in one corner, and the blue smoke wreathed its way out through the many yawning crevices which, on cold and wet nights, proved equally convenient apertures for incoming wind and rain. An extemporised bed, a few ragged shawls, a table, and some pots, pans, and crockery completed the furniture of this miserable shanty in which lived the ruined farmer, his wife, and eleven children. Doheny himself was away at work; he had obtained summer employment in the neighbourhood, and earned ten shillings a week. This kept them from starving, but it could not be expected to last, after which all that stood between them and that dreaded institution, the workhouse,—a place even more detested by the Irish than by the English poor,—was the kindness of the neighbours, who, one and all, sympathised with Doheny and execrated the landlord's cruelty. As Doreen talked to the mother,—a comely, blue-eyed, well-mannered woman,—a sort of fury of pity filled her heart; the sight of the little wan children, just as pretty and innocent and helpless as Mollie and Bride, made her eyes fill with tears. She remembered, with a shudder, that this eviction case was only one of a thousand. What was to set right this terrible wrong? How was the injustice of centuries to be remedied? Who would free her countrymen from the intolerable state of bondage under which they groaned? Who would deliver them from "Castle" rule, and give them a national Parliament, and remove those bitter grievances which had rankled so long in their hearts?

Was it wonderful that from time to time there should be kindled, even in a naturally quiet and patient people, a blind wrath which threatened to break out into a revolution as overwhelming and terrible as that of the French peasantry when, maddened by long ages of tyranny, they rose and swept their foes from the land? She emptied her purse in that forlorn shanty, all the time miserably conscious that no temporary almsgiving could heal the sores of her country, that no tinkering legislation would suffice, but that before misery and distress and hatred could cease, the injustice itself must be removed, and Ireland, self-governed and self-respecting, must work out her own salvation.

Max was not sorry to get away from the south to a region where the distress was less severe, and where the relations between landlord and tenant were less strained. It was on a singularly beautiful summer's evening that they were set down at Rathdrum, and the beautiful valley of Clara, with its winding river, its verdant woods, its gorse-covered hills, seemed to Doreen even more lovely than in her childish recollections. If, perhaps, the mountains were not quite so high as she had imagined, there was yet all the time that indescribable charm of recognition, and happy memories seemed to flood the landscape with a glory which no Alpine scene could have possessed for her. Max enjoyed her pleasure unfeignedly; even the trivial little huts of the poor—the house with a stable door in the form of a horseshoe, the curious rhyme on the Rest House, the cottage where the old woman lived who had cried herself blind at the death of her husband—interested him, just because they

brought into Doreen's face such a glow of excitement and happy recognition.

"And now look to your left," she cried; "there is the first of the seven churches, that tiny ruin down below us; and there is the round tower of Glendalough; and there the little lake; and on beyond, nestling among the mountains, you just catch a glimpse of the larger lake. Oh, how homelike it feels! How glad I am we came here!"

"What are all those cars?" asked Mrs. Hereford. "Why, look; there are dozens of them waiting outside the hotel."

"A funeral, I think," said Doreen. "There is a little graveyard close by, I remember."

Max having ordered dinner at once, the ladies went to their rooms to dress; but on coming down at the appointed time, found no dinner ready, only a worried-looking old waiter, who came up to them with many apologies. "You'll excuse us being a little late, ma'am," he said to Mrs. Hereford. "Dinner shall be ready in a few minutes, but we are all in a bustle. You see, ma'am, we didn't like to refuse the funeral."

"Oh, we are in no hurry," said Mrs. Hereford, pleasantly. "Was it someone from the neighbourhood who had died?"

"No, ma'am; from a great distance," replied the waiter. "'Tis a sacred place, you see,—Glendalough; people come here from all parts of the country to be buried."

The notion of people "coming to be buried" upset Max's gravity; he went out into the garden, shaking with laughter.

"That's a nice, cheerful remark to make to tired travellers who have come here to regain their health," said Doreen, gaily. "He might at anyrate have waited till we had had dinner and were feeling a little better."

There still remained a week before they need return to London. The weather was perfect, and the two lovers enjoyed to their hearts' content the lovely shady walks by the lake; while Mrs. Hereford, who was something of an antiquarian, delighted in St. Kevin's chapel and kitchen, and made friends with the talkative old man, who loved to show off all the quaint relics that had been discovered. On the Monday they drove through the lovely vale of Avoca, and Max and Doreen spent one long day right in the heart of the mountains, driving by that magnificent road made in the time of the rebellion, and revelling in the keen, fresh air which blew through and through them as they climbed higher into a wild region of bog and mountain lake, while all about them rose a perfect sea of hill-tops, stretching as far as the eye could reach in wave upon wave of grey and purple.

Doreen was full of anecdotes of the country; she remembered her father's stories about Holt and brave Susy Toole of Annamoe, and knew precisely the right path to take for a walk down to Lough Dan, where they borrowed a boat, and rowed slowly past the exquisitely wooded heights, grieving to think that they had only one more day left for County Wicklow, and making many plans for a return next year, possibly on their wedding journey.

The last morning proved grey and cloudy; but after a sharp shower, the sun came out, and Mrs. Hereford proposed that they should take a car.

"We ought to pay another visit to the Upper Lake," she said. Let us take advantage of the sunshine. Surely a day that clears at eleven is promising even in Ireland."

So they set off together in excellent spirits, planning a drive in the afternoon to the Devil's glen if the weather should permit.

"You must certainly go there either to-day or on our way to the train to-morrow," said Doreen; "for unless my memory plays me false, it is one of the loveliest places in the whole county. Our waiter made another good remark yesterday when we asked about it. 'Oh, the Devil's glen,' he said, 'is well worth visiting; but the proprietor is in England, so you can't drive through, but must go on foot.'"

Max laughed. "I see you love to dispose of the devil and of the snakes in my country. But we will walk through the glen. What is the origin of the name, by-the-bye?"

"Oh!" said Doreen, with a smile that rippled over her whole face; "it is rather a nice old legend. St. Kevin, you know, was the greatest of saints; but he had one human weakness: he loved gadding about, and was not content always to remain in Glendalough, but would visit now one part of the country, now another. People wondered at this, and one day the saint's niece found out the reason. St. Kevin was bathing in the lake, and she kept watch at a little distance by his clothes to see that no one ran off with them. What was her surprise when she caught sight of two little devils sitting in his brogues. She called her uncle's attention to them, and he threatened to send them down to the bottom of the lake. 'Don't send us there,' implored the devils; 'tis no

great harm, after all, that we have done to your riverence; we only made you somewhat too fond of travelling.' Then St. Kevin felt sorry for the poor devils, and he said he would not send them into the lake, but instead he banished them to a certain wild and beautiful glen at a little distance; and ever after the good saint remained at Glendalough, nor desired to roam as before."

"I like those old legends about the human weaknesses of the saints," said Mrs. Hereford. "Stop the car, Max, for a minute; we shall get a good view of St. Kevin's bed across the lake just here."

There was a little break of about a hundred yards in a plantation of firs growing on the shore; the bank went sheer down on to a tiny strip of rocky beach, and across the calm lake they had a lovely view of the rugged Purple Mountains, and of the entrance of the cave known as St. Kevin's bed.

"I think Moore has been hard on Glendalough," said Mrs. Hereford. "This is not at all my idea of—

" 'That lake whose gloomy shore
Skylark never warbles o'er.'"

Anything more peaceful and lovely I have never seen."

Max, who was driving as usual, felt just then a sudden strain upon the reins in his hand, and in another instant the horse was kicking and plunging desperately. A poor, half-witted man, in a white suit and outlandish straw hat wreathed with ferns, had suddenly emerged round the corner, and the horse, startled by the stealthy movements of this strange apparition, gibbed violently. A dreadful moment of uncertainty followed. They were within a hair's breadth of the little cliff above the lake, when suddenly the poor, half-witted creature

settled the question. Seeing the great peril, yet powerless to help, he uttered a piercing cry, and threw his arms above his head. The horse, in spite of all that Max could do, gibbed again more frantically, and in an instant the car and its occupants were precipitated over the edge of the rock. Doreen was flung far out, but before there was time for more than the reflection, 'It is all over with us,' her dress had caught in a thorn-bush and she was thrown violently upon the bank.

She felt bruised and shaken, unable to think clearly, and when a bicyclist, who had chanced to pass by just at the time of the accident, came to her help, she scarcely realised for a minute that it was not Max who asked her whether she were hurt, and helped her to disentangle herself from the bush, which had probably saved her life.

"You are sure you are not hurt?" asked the traveller,—a pleasant-looking Trinity College student in bicycling dress.

"Not at all, thank-you," she said half dreamily. Then with a sudden agony of recollection, "Where is Max? Is he hurt?"

"Your friend is over there by the car," said the student; "he is not hurt, but the lady is, I fear, injured. Don't go just this minute; they—they are trying to reach her."

But Doreen was not to be hindered; she struggled to her feet, and grasping the stranger's arm, made him help her over the rocks to the place where Max and two other men were lifting away the car from Mrs. Hereford's prostrate form. She pressed forward, and it was upon her knee that they placed the deathly white face. The only sign of injury was upon the left temple, but Max at the first glance knew that his mother was dead.

Perhaps it was owing to his own fall that he, as yet, felt nothing; he stood silently gazing down at the inanimate form; but Doreen, to whom the dread truth had also been revealed, scarcely gathered as she glanced up into his face whether he knew or not. She turned to the student who had helped her, and asked him to ride quickly to the hotel, and bid them to send help and to order the doctor as promptly as possible.

Meanwhile, the poor, half-witted man who had been the cause of the disaster had clambered down to the lake, and now he came shambling forward with his hat full of water, talking incoherently, but evidently imploring Doreen to bathe the deathly white face on her knee. She was touched by the poor fellow's thoughtfulness, and though she knew too well that all endeavours to restore life were vain, she took out her handkerchief and dipped it in the water, softly bathing that one dark spot on the left temple which had caused instant death. Perhaps she hoped that by doing so she might keep Max yet a little longer from realising what had happened, or it might have been only her innate courtesy towards the poor Irishman, who stood watching them with the frightened gravity of a child. The next person to arrive was the old guide who had so greatly delighted in Mrs. Hereford's love of antiquities.

"Ah, poor lady!" he cried, his eyes filling with tears; "I little thought when we were all laughing yesterday at St. Kevin's chair that this would have been the end of it. 'Twas she herself said she didn't wish a long life, when she found that she could not span the cross down yonder, and fine and pleased she was that you young ones could span it, for she said she would like you to

be spared this long while. How did it happen, thin, at all, at all?"

"The horse shied when that poor, half-witted fellow came suddenly round the corner," said Doreen, "and gibbed till the car went right over the bank on to the rocks."

"Poor mad Connor!" said the guide, shaking his head; "he's but a harmless fellow, and wouldn't hurt a soul for all the world. He doesn't belong to these parts, but has lived here since they evicted him from his home in Donegal. And it's mad he's been ever since the day they pulled down his house."

Max made no comment on the words, but he sighed heavily. It seemed to him impossible to stir at that time in Ireland without being confronted by the results of the bad land-laws, and the bad harvests, and by the evicting landlord, who, like the servant in the parable, seized his fellow-servant by the throat, saying, "Pay me that thou owest," disregarding the entreaty, "Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all."

What was likely to be the end of it? He perceived, with the sort of dull pain which was all he was capable of feeling, that this accident which had robbed him of his mother was indirectly caused by the wrongs and sufferings of Ireland.

How long they waited there on the rocks by the side of the lake, he never knew; he had lost all sense of time, but the scene stamped itself indelibly on his brain. He could always see that little group of sympathetic strangers, and his mother's pallid face, contrasting so strangely, in its perfect peace, with the white, anxious, sorrowful face of Doreen. The girl was bare-headed, and the fall had loosened her hair, which hung in dis-

ordered curls about her face, making her look curiously like the child Doreen who had steered the boat on Lough Lee. Something, too, of the same expression of strong resolution, holding horror and dismay in check, could be traced in her firmly-closed lips and earnest eyes. Beyond her stood poor, mad Connor, in his outlandish garments, still full of pathetic belief in the power of fresh water from the lake to restore life; and, in the background, one of the bicyclists talked with the old guide in a hushed voice, speculating as to when his companion would return with help from the hotel.

Alas! as Max knew too well, the help could do but little. When, at length, the landlord and several others came to their assistance, and the last painful journey had been effected, he needed no words from the doctor to make him understand that his mother was dead.

"There can have been no pain; nothing but the horror of the fall which you yourself passed through; then instantaneous death," said the doctor, turning away from the bedside.

Max tried to speak, but his voice failed him. For some minutes there was utter silence in the room, save for the subdued sobs of the faithful old Harding, who had been Mrs. Hereford's maid ever since her marriage. Then Doreen put her hand into her lover's, and drew him gently aside.

"You had better let the doctor look at your wrist," she said, leading the way to the next room. "I think it must have been sprained in the fall."

How she had noticed what he himself had been unconscious of, amazed Max; but there was relief in being guided like a child,—relief in the physical pain of the

doctor's examination, and even in the pang of fear that shot through his heart as, for the first time, he realised the peril she had been exposed to.

"Are you sure you are not hurt, darling?" he said.

"Quite," she replied, disregarding the presence of the doctor, and bending over him with a caress which conveyed to him, better than any words could have done, her perfect sympathy and love.

"If there is anything I can do for you," said the doctor, "pray tell me. I am driving now to Annamoe and could send any telegrams you please."

"Will you send for General Hereford?" asked Doreen, gently.

Max groaned.

"I suppose I ought to ask him to come, and I am afraid he is in London again by this time."

He shrank inexpressibly from the thought of meeting anyone; and his uncle, though kindly enough in his own way, was a man who would be likely to jar upon one who was in great trouble. Then he realised that for Doreen's sake it was necessary that some third person should come over at once, and with that thought came a more miserable consciousness of his loss than he had yet gained.

"Leave it to us," said Doreen. "We will see to everything;" and she left the room with the doctor, and going downstairs to the comfortable little private sitting-room, prepared to write the sad news, thankful to be able to spare Max in any way, but breaking down sadly as she drew towards her Mrs. Hereford's own writing-case to search for telegram forms, and noticed all about

the room the signs and tokens of the one who had been so suddenly snatched away from them.

The doctor was glad to see her tears blistering the paper as she wrote. He knew that it was the natural and healthy relief in trouble, and that whereas her calmness and presence of mind had hitherto been an inestimable help to her lover, she might do even more for him now by that natural emotion which he would be little likely to yield to if left alone.

When the kindly Irishman had taken leave, and all the necessary arrangements had been seen to, Doreen sought out Harding the maid, knowing well how much the faithful old servant would feel the death of her mistress. But Harding, who had broken down at first, became calmer directly she saw another in need of help and comfort, and Doreen found great consolation in her homely wisdom.

She looked through fast-falling tears at the peaceful, smiling face of the dead, and Harding, drying her own eyes, was glad to open her heart to one so thoroughly sympathetic.

"I never saw one that looked more happy, spite of the sad and sudden ending it has been," said the maid. "I have not seen my dear lady look so content since her marriage day. And I take it her whole life here has just been one long waiting,—her months of happiness were but few. And oh, miss!" she said, replacing the sheet once more over the beautiful face, "I think it would have broken her heart if the Lord had ordered it otherwise and you or the master had been killed when the car fell."

"But what can we do for him now, Harding?" sobbed the girl. "Oh, what can we do?"

Harding's advice was simple and practical.

"Let me come to your room with you, miss, and do up your hair," she suggested, "and we will ring and order tea to be taken in to the sitting-room, and then I'll persuade the master to come down and have some with you. He'll do anything for your sake, miss."

And so, shielded and helped in every way by these two, Max passed through the first terrible hours of his bereavement. In some ways they were far less painful than many of the hours he had to endure later on. He was partially stunned by the shock, and had not altogether realised what life without his mother would be to him. Doreen, too, had been able to silence his agony of questioning whether, if he had acted differently, the accident could possibly have been averted. For the time her childlike faith had soothed him, and worse doubts, which were to haunt him later on, had not as yet found place in his heart. He had heard of Harding's words about his mother, and as the evening wore on, he more and more realised the great danger through which Doreen had been kept unharmed, and her devotion and perfect understanding made him thank God that he was spared to a life which, without her, would have been blank indeed.

The next day dawned sadly enough for them, and Max, who was a novice in suffering of any sort, shrank inexpressibly from talking with anyone; his sole comfort lay in wandering among the woods near the lake with Doreen beside him, and it tried him infinitely less to come within sight of the scene of the accident than to meet the sympathetic looks, still worse to hear the sympathetic words, of those at the hotel.

They kept on the further side of the lough, and presently found a little, sheltered nook beside a tiny waterfall, where they rested for hours, sometimes silent, sometimes talking a little, but always with that sense of perfect unity and rest in each other's company, which was their best comfort in this time of sorrow. On returning to the hotel, they found a telegram from General Hereford, who had reached Dublin early that morning and might be expected at Glendalough that very afternoon. Max sighed heavily and handed the paper to Doreen.

"He must have taken the night mail," she said, trying hard to feel grateful for his promptitude, yet shrinking inexpressibly from meeting one of whose dislike and disapproval she was too sensitive not to be perfectly well aware.

If Max had welcomed his uncle's advent, she would have been delighted to think that he would so soon be with them, but it was quite clear that he dreaded it above all things.

"I will leave you to meet him alone?" she suggested, thinking that probably this would make it less painful for him. But Max would not hear of such a plan.

"Don't go," he cried, snatching her hand in his, as they heard the arrival of the car, and the well-known hearty voice outside. "For Heaven's sake, stay and talk to him, for I can't!"

He threw open the door of the private sitting-room, and with an effort went out to greet General Hereford.

"My dear fellow, I'm so glad you sent for me!" said the old man, with a kindly greeting; "this is a terrible affair, terrible! I can hardly yet realise it."

"It is good of you to have come," said Max strug-

gling hard to control his voice. "If you will just go into this room for a minute, I will see that your things are taken up."

And hurrying away upon this pretext, he left the General face to face with Doreen, who swiftly crossed the room to greet him, with the spontaneous warmth and hospitality which naturally came to her aid. He started a little on perceiving her, and his handshake was stiff and frigid.

"I was not aware that you were here, Miss O'Ryan," he said gravely.

Although, of course, he did not add the words, "And I am extremely sorry that you should be," his tone implied them. At any other time Doreen would have been half angry, half amused, but to-day the disapproval pained her.

"I was travelling with Max and his mother," she said, her voice trembling a little.

"Oh, indeed," he said, dropping into an armchair; "I was not aware of that. A most sad ending to your tour; you must, I am sure, regret having planned it."

Doreen was silent. The tour had been entirely planned by Mrs. Hereford, but she could not bring herself to say this; indeed, it was a moment or two before she could trust herself to speak at all, and the tears were still in her eyes when at last she said:—

"As you say, it was a most sad ending, and a terrible shock to Max. The only comfort is that he was not more hurt. His wrist will be well, they think, in a few days."

"It all comes of these abominable Irish cars," said the General, irascibly; "if you had been travelling in a civilised country it would never have happened. But

what can you expect, when you have to deal with a lazy, unenterprising people, who rest content with old-fashioned vehicles of that sort?"

Doreen felt her blood grow hot, but she was not going to be betrayed into a quarrel with General Hereford while the dead body of his sister-in-law lay in the room above, and though trembling with suppressed anger, she forced herself to get up in silence and ring the bell.

"I will order tea," she said, after a brief, uncomfortable pause; "you must, I am sure, be very tired, after travelling all night."

The General, who was indeed both tired and sad, was obliged to recognise that this Irish girl, of whom he so strongly disapproved, could, on occasions, show a dignified courtesy which many a duchess might have envied.

"You must not think I meant anything personal," he said, with awkward anxiety to make up for his unfortunate speech. "I look upon you, of course, as practically English."

He did not at all see that by this well-intentioned remark he had reached the very acme of rudeness, and Doreen could not resist the temptation of giving him a little thrust in return.

"You can't expect a descendant of the O'Ryans to take that as a compliment," she said, with a smile which somehow made him feel uncomfortable.

A knock at the door relieved him from the necessity of replying, but his brow clouded when he perceived an aged priest entering the room, holding in his hand a great bunch of arum lilies.

"Oh, Father Monahan, is it you?" cried Doreen, starting up to greet him.

"Forgive me for intruding," said the priest. "I saw Mr. Hereford outside, and thought I should find you alone. Will you use these lilies for the coffin? There was a hedge of them growing round a little cabin a few miles from here, and I thought you would like them."

"How very good of you!" said Doreen.

"Nay," said Father Monahan; "'tis the poor woman's gift entirely, for she would not hear of taking payment when she learnt what I wanted them for. You'll never find truer sympathy than the sympathy you get among the Irish poor."

General Hereford stalked across the room, and Doreen, rashly concluding that he meant civilly to admire the flowers, introduced the priest; but the General, with the stiffest of bows, passed in dead silence out of the room.

"Oh!" cried Doreen, with an impatient gesture, "isn't it a miserable thing that even at such a time as this he must parade his contempt for the Irish!"

Father Monahan's kindly, weather-beaten face bore a look of perplexity. He well understood the needs and characters of his own flock. All his life he had been toiling among them, shepherding them with that wonderful individual care which perhaps reaches its highest development among the best and most conscientious of the parish priests in rural Ireland. But before this man of the world, this English officer bristling with the prejudices of his class and race and religion, the old priest stood fairly bewildered.

"I have observed," he said in his mild voice, "that there is a certain sort of Englishman upon whom the sight of a priest acts as a red rag acts upon a bull. I

am sorry I happened to come in at so inopportune a moment."

Doreen could only comfort herself with the reflection that Max did not share in his uncle's prejudices, but she went upstairs to weave the arums into a wreath, with a very sore heart.

Sitting beside the open window in her bedroom, however, the peacefulness of the summer afternoon gradually stole into her heart. She was glad that the room had no view of the lake, only a distant view of the mountains towards Laragh, looking higher than they were, in reality, through the soft, luminous haze. Down below she could see the cows wandering into the yard to be milked, and pausing to drink at the round stone fountain in the centre. The cow-herd crossed over to one of the sheds with his stool and milk-pail clattering cheerfully, while the beautiful air which he whistled, "Billy Byrne of Ballymanus," took her right back to the days of her childhood, and made her realise how true in many ways is the poet's saying, that "memory is possession."

It was a comfort, too, that she had much to do for Max, and his look of relief, when she appeared again at dinner-time and contrived to keep General Hereford talking serenely about his visit to the Riviera, repaid her again and again for the effort it cost her. Later in the evening, when the General was dozing over his newspaper, the two lovers wandered out in the summer twilight, past the little stream, and into the old churchyard close by. The ruins looked dim and ghostly in the dusk, and the old round tower stood out solemnly against the pale sky. There was something comforting

to Doreen in its mere strength and its great age. She loved to think of the old times when free Ireland had held an honoured place amongst the nations, and when this quiet little Glendalough had been the school to which youths from all parts of Europe had been sent for education. Then she sighed as she remembered that the place so especially dear to her must ever have for Max the most sad associations.

"Our last night here," she said softly. "I am afraid you will never wish to see this place again."

"Don't say that," said Max, quickly. "The place where my mother spent her last happy days can never be spoilt for me. I shall certainly want to see it again. You and I will come together."

She gave him a mute caress. Then, after a few minutes, resumed once more, with much more brightness in her tone:—

"I had been half afraid that this must give you a distaste for Ireland. I am so glad it has not done that."

"I think it is quite the other way," said Max. "It has made me more than ever anxious to serve your country, darling."

She looked up into his face, and something in its expression of pure and noble purpose made her heart throb with eager joy, and with all her being she thanked God that it had been given to her to love a good, true-hearted man, who was ready, cost what it might, to take up a cause that was likely to win him infinite disapproval.

THE END.

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